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A WINDOW IN THRUMS

SCOTTISH LIFE AND CHARACTER

PAINTED BY

H. J. DOBSON, R.S.W.

DESCRIBED BY

WM. SANDERSON

WITH
SIXTEEN FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS
IN COLOUR

A. & C. BLACK, LTD.
4, 5 & 6 SOHO SQUARE, LONDON, W. 1
1919

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad.

BURNS.

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PREFACE

THE scenes presented in these pages do not profess to be a complete survey of social life in Scotland; but it may be claimed for them that, in their subject-matter, they are typical of the Scottish nation. There are peers in Scotland, as well as peasants, castles as well as cottages; and the habits of thought and manner among the classes of the North differ as much as they differ in England, or in any other ancient civilisation. Still, as Disraeli said, it is the humble in our realm that is most abiding in national characteristics; which thought is the justification, should any be deemed necessary, for these pages.

The List of Illustrations contains the names of the owners of the paintings which have been reproduced in this volume. Artist, Author,

and Publishers desire to return their thanks to those who placed the originals at their disposal, and to the Church of Scotland Committee on Life and Work, the owners of the copyright of seven of the pictures.

To the Scot at home and abroad this volume may provide a few pleasing reminders of that lang syne which now almost seems like a previous state of existence; while to the stranger it may prove an incentive to closer acquaintance with the subject.

Auld Scotia stretches out her hand
To bid you welcome to her land;
Her mountains, floods, and waving trees,
Her rugged coasts and inland seas;
To lip and hand a welcome starts—
A welcome from true Scottish hearts.

WM. SANDERSON.

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SCOTTISH LIFE AND CHARACTER

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

NEXT to religion there is, perhaps, no purer or more unselfish feeling that can thrill the human heart than the love of the homeland, and the advantages to be gained by keeping in close touch with the old home can hardly be over-estimated. How the heart warms and melts as the soft tones of the mother tongue fall upon the ear! Where are now the toils and cares of the day? They are vanished! and we hear once more the musical ripple of our native streams, the familiar song of the birds, or the sigh of the soft wind as it stirs the forest leaves or shakes the heather and the blue-bells in the little glen where we wandered when time was young. "Sentiment! sentiment! nothing

but sentiment!" exclaims the money-grubber, whose life is an eager and all-absorbing struggle to become rich and increased in goods. He too has occasional soft moments, when the almost quenched spirit bursts into flame; but he extinguishes the divine fire by the self-deluding hope that he will have plenty of time for such things when he has made his fortune. Vain delusion! When he has acquired a competency, as he most probably will, he has no heart left to enjoy his leisure, and will be likely to sink into his grave as soon as he stops toiling. Nature cares not for cumberers, and seems to delight in getting rid of her selfish sons as soon as they cease to turn the treadmill. We generally find that such men, when they left their country homes, kept clear of their old companions who had preceded them to the city, seldom revisited the scenes of childhood, and seemed in mortal dread that the city folks would hear the slightest country accent in their speech.

The true patriot who has the best interests of his country at heart, while not forgetting the political and municipal movements of his day, will not fail to assist in the preservation of those traits of character which have done so much to build up and strengthen the nation, nor will he ignore the

peculiar customs and observances which have come down from the forefathers. There was a time, not so far distant, when the old celebrations and festivals fell into disuse, and were looked upon as childish and unworthy of the attention of an educated people; but in our own day we have witnessed a remarkable revival of many of these observances, while the study of folk-lore and kindred subjects is no longer looked upon merely as an innocent amusement. Students of history begin to see that these apparent trifles are an important part of the cement which binds together the social fabric, while the politicians and municipal reformers see in them a safety-valve which permits the surplus energy to be turned into harmless channels. In these days of high pressure we have more need than ever of such simple joys, and hence every attempt to revive and preserve them should be welcomed by the true lover of his country.

When we turn our attention to national peculiarities we are studying human nature, and that is never an unprofitable study. These characteristic peculiarities can, to some extent, be discovered in those floating anecdotes which it is the delight of the people in the various districts to claim as their own special property, but which have

evidently one common origin. Occasionally these stories, however, are of hoary antiquity, and may even be found in strange garb far beyond our frontiers. The late Mr Kennedy, the famous Scottish vocalist, put this point very neatly when referring to some humorous anecdotes which he was telling. "These stories," he said, "are often to be found in other nations, arrayed, it may be, in very strange dress, but the pluffin' bit is aye the same."

It is a hard-beaten pathway from the days of the genial Dean Ramsay to the latest book of reminiscences, and so it is not our intention in this volume to depend to any great extent upon anecdotes which would almost invariably be familiar to the reader. We prefer rather, by means of pen and pencil, to present a few pictures of that simple Scottish life which is fast receding from our view. Fifty years ago the Dean began his famous volume with the words: "Many things connected with our Scottish manners of former times are fast becoming obsolete, and we seem at present to be placed in a juncture when some Scottish traditions are in danger of being lost entirely." If this statement was true at that time, how much more is it so after we have passed through the last

half-century, with all its marvellous progress and consequent levelling down of old customs and peculiarities!

To observe the life and manners of a people it is not necessary to place ourselves upon any exalted coign of vantage, for, as Mr J. M. Barrie has shown us in his *Window in Thrums*, the whole life of a community can be focussed into a very limited range of vision. By means of some rapid observations from the famous window, Leeby and Jess were able in a few moments to construct the story of their neighbours' movements and to foretell coming events with remarkable certainty. Such points of observation are not confined to "Thrums," and even yet may be found in many a rural district. Notwithstanding the levelling agencies at work, there are yet some quiet, sequestered spots in our native land where life seems to flow on as smoothly as it did in the olden days, and fortunate indeed is the city dweller who can sojourn there for a season. He will discover that the old-time life had many advantages, and that a people whose wants are few have generally keener powers of enjoyment than those who, by reason of greater comfort and luxury, have lost that sharpness of appetite which is half the joy of realisation. The little cottage with its

whitewashed walls to which the ivy and honeysuckle fondly cling, its little windows and thatched roof, may be a veritable haven of rest and contentment, where that "peace of mind dearer than all" can be enjoyed to the full; while the simple garden, with its old-world flowers and its memory-haunting perfumes of thyme, mint, and southernwood, may prove an Eden of delight.

Nature is full of compensations, and, though the inhabitants of such rural solitudes may be deprived of many of the physical comforts and mental activities of the town, they are blessed with the ability to rest when the toils of the day are ended, a pleasure to which their city brethren are too often strangers. Only those who have undergone the strain of the intense life which the city demands from those citizens, who are possessed of hearts capable of sharing the sorrows of others, can fully appreciate the restfulness of country life. We too often forget in these modern days that it is necessary for us to withdraw for a season from the busy haunts of men, so that heart and brain may expand under the life-giving impulses which Nature is ever ready to bestow on those who wait upon her.

If the visitor to such a retreat had the good fortune to spend his early life amid similar scenes,

he will meet with reminders at every turn, and the old, well-nigh forgotten village days will come back to him with a freshness truly surprising. He will discover that with advancing years his memory takes but a light hold on passing events, while the drama of the past, with its scenery and actors, becomes to him as the living present. Once more the mental perspective is lengthened, and time is no longer counted by flying minutes. Again the little glen widens into a broad valley, and the surrounding hills seem to be the outer edge of the world, as in the days

When summer seemed a cycle,
  And winter was an age;
From New Year's Day to Hogmanay
  A life-long pilgrimage.
Then skies above seemed brighter,
  And deeper lay the snow,
The river's tide—an ocean wide,
  Fifty years ago.

CHAPTER II

SCOTTISH CHURCH LIFE

NOTWITHSTANDING the almost severe plainness of the church services in Scotland, there is no country in the world where church life has taken a deeper hold upon the people. If some historian were to remove the Kirk from Scotland's story, the reader would, like the astronomer before the discovery of Neptune, feel that there was some unseen influence moving and affecting the whole progress of events, and the hidden power would be found out by as natural a process of deduction as that which led to the discovery of the outermost planet of our solar system. Since the days of the Reformation, at least, our whole national life has been coloured by the Kirk, for the Scot is ever inclined to approach religious subjects with his mental faculties sharpened by the restraint he puts upon the emotional side of his nature.

It is difficult for the younger generation to form

an adequate idea of the plainness and simplicity of the Scottish church services of the past, and yet there are many out-of-the-way spots where we may still worship God as our fathers did, and where the worshippers seem untouched by the surging tide of modern life. I can imagine no better means of calming the overstrung nerves and soothing the wearied brain of the city toiler, than a visit to a little country kirk on a bright Sunday morning in spring. The way may be long, but the walk through the clear air will have an invigorating effect, while the restful green of the fresh young foliage will please the eye so long accustomed to the grey tints of the city.

Here and there along the hillsides, or through the little glens, the kirk folk come in twos and threes, saying little, perhaps, to one another, but thinking deeply, as is the manner of our countrymen. If we join ourselves to them, however, we will find them not so irresponsive as we expect, and the conversation may prove so interesting and edifying that we shall reach the kirkyard gate almost before we are aware that we are near the little Zion among the hills. Those who have come from a distance are generally in plenty of time, and so there is an opportunity for a "crack" before

worship begins. They converse in quiet tones, for the calm peacefulness of the Sabbath morn, combined with the memories of the sacred dead who lie all around, has a restraining and refining influence.

Leaving the country folks to their "cracks," we drop our contribution into the plate which stands on the greensward outside the church door, and enter the quaint old building. We are at once impressed by the peaceful feeling which prevails, such a contrast to what is felt on entering the average city church before the service begins. The interior, which may be a little gloomy on dull days, is bright and cheerful on this splendid spring morning, when the sunlight pours through the windows and illuminates even the farthest corners, where many a bairn and not a few adults may have slept through the lengthy sermons which were so common long ago. As if to increase the cheerful feeling, there is heard a slight flutter, and then a large red butterfly flashes through the edifice, while the liquid notes of one of the birds float in on the morning breeze. The air, laden with the sweet perfume from the lilacs and wallflowers in the manse garden, fills the little sanctuary with purest incense.

It is pleasant to sit in this back pew and watch the grey-haired grandfather and the bonnie blue-eyed bairn, as they walk quietly up the aisle and take their respective places, while in some of the grown-up people we may recognise old schoolmates whom we have not met since the far-back schooldays. At length the silence is broken by the once familiar tones of the old bell, as it swings in the belfry and sends its invitation to worship over the valleys and hills which appear clear and distinct through the unobscured windows, presenting pictures of natural beauty far excelling the finest stained glass.

To those accustomed to gorgeous pageantry and voluptuous music, the simple service of a Scottish kirk may appear barren and unbeautiful, but there can be no doubt that there is a something in it which appeals to the true Scot, whose emotional nature has always been kept well in hand. Surprise is often expressed at the patience of our forefathers, who could contentedly sit for hours listening to discourses which were divided and subdivided, until the heads of the sections reached, in some cases, the extraordinary number of eighty; but we must not forget that the sermon was their only literary feast for the week. Many of them lived

in lonely spots where their hard toil left them little time for reading even the few books they possessed, and where the sound of human voices, outside those of their small family circle, was seldom heard. Little wonder then that, when the minister found the sand in the hour-glass run down before he had finished his discourse, and reversing it said, "We'll have another glass," the remark was received with as much pleasure by his hearers as a similar statement would be accepted by a toper amid entirely different surroundings. In some churches it was the duty of the precentor, whose desk was immediately under the pulpit, to watch and turn the hour-glass, and one worthy leader of praise was wont to remind the preacher of the flight of time by holding up the empty hour-glass above the pulpit Bible.

It is only within recent years that the generally accepted church festivals and holy days have had any recognition in Scotland, and hence it was natural that the celebration of the Communion should have great prominence in the Presbyterian Church. I remember once conversing with an actor on the subject of impressive sights, and was much struck with his remark that the most solemn sight that he had witnessed was a Scottish Communion.

Since then I have seen the most gorgeous ritual in continental cathedrals, one in particular where the wealthiest king in Europe bowed low as the priest elevated the Host, while a choir and orchestra of highly paid musicians, numbering nearly a hundred, performed some of the grandest Mass music; but I am still inclined to think that the actor was right, and that the sublime and the simple are never far apart.

The Communion seasons, or "occasions," as they were sometimes called, generally occurred only twice a year, so there was much more preparation for the sacred ordinance than is customary now when the celebrations are more frequent. For two or three Sundays previous to the Communion its nature and obligations were explained from the pulpit, while the preacher made earnest appeals to his flock to examine themselves, so that they might be worthy partakers. For several weeks those who were to be communicants for the first time, had been attending a class in the church or the manse, where their duties and privileges were explained, and they were prepared for their admission to the membership of the church, which generally took place on the Fast Day—a Thursday, as a rule—or on the Saturday preceding the Communion. Those

who have witnessed the confirmation services in other churches may think there is little beauty in the Scottish mode of receiving the young communicants into the visible church, by the elders simply giving the right hand of fellowship; but I question if the young folk, who are prepared for the confirmation service, experience such a powerful feeling of awe as the Scottish youths or maidens who enter the sanctuary on the memorable Sabbath morn when they are to partake of the Sacrament for the first time.

The usual stillness of the church is intensified to-day, and the earnest faces of the congregation, marked by intellectual force, are turned steadily towards the preacher, who sees in the eyes of his hearers a spirituality which is independent of excitement. The preliminary portion of the service has a special meaning, while the old Psalms and their familiar tunes are sung with new feeling and expression. The prayers are followed attentively, even though their length may entail a considerable mental and physical strain, and the sermon is looked forward to with a keen expectancy. As the discourse proceeds, the minister seems to ascend Mount Ebal, and from there to pronounce the curses which will follow those who obey not the

SCOTTISH SACRAMENT

commandments. The hearts of the young communicants almost stand still as they listen to the solemn words, and they begin to doubt if they are worthy to take their place at the table, with its symbolical cover of snowy whiteness. But the thunder-cloud clears from the preacher's brow, and he passes over to Mount Gerizim, and speaks of the blessings which attend those who accept the Gospel message and endeavour to fulfil the law's demands.

At the close of the sermon, and while the thirty-fifth Paraphrase is being sung to the tune "Communion," the minister descends from the pulpit and takes his place among the elders, who are seated where the members of the choir generally sit. Some of the elders may occupy very humble positions in life, but to-day they are ennobled by the place they hold in the church. After a few words of warning, called "fencing the tables," to those who would thoughtlessly come to the ordinance, the minister reads the "warrant" from 1 Corinthians, 11th chapter, verses 23–29, and thereafter gives the bread and wine to the elders. Perfect stillness reigns throughout the building, while the scene which took place in the upper room, nineteen hundred years ago, is faithfully reproduced in this

simple and solemn manner. With reverent awe the elders now remove the sacred elements from the Communion table and convey them to the pews or special tables, where the communicants have taken their places. From the gallery the children look down with mingled feelings of fear and curiosity, as the elders move to and fro distributing the bread and wine among the people, and their wondering eyes seem to ask, "What mean ye by these things?"

To those accustomed to emotional worship, a Scottish Communion or Sacrament, as it is frequently called, may appear cold and lifeless, but our preachers know that the brain cells of their hearers are in action, while their hearts are touched though they show it not. The solemn stillness which prevails during the service is grander and more heart-searching than the most elaborate ritual and finest music, while, to the truly devout,

> The simple rite is made by faith
> A miracle of love Divine,
> And though the eye of sense may see
> No change within the bread and wine,
> Yet to the truly pure in heart
> The inward vision cannot fail—
> The bread is broken by the Lord,
> The cup becomes the Holy Grail.

CHAPTER III

SCOTTISH MINISTERS

No true estimate can be formed of the causes which have made the Scot what he is, without taking into account the influence of the Scottish clergy. The very powerful mental control which the ministers had over their flocks may not always have been what we, of the present day, would consider good, but on the whole it had an upward tendency. Apart altogether, however, from their more immediate church duties, the Scottish ministers of the past have done much to mould the Scottish nation by their splendid work as practical managers of the parish schools. While this statement applies principally to the ministers of the Established Church, it is equally true that the dissenting ministers threw themselves as heartily into the cause of education, and left no stone unturned in their efforts to provide for the youth of their congregations that mental training which

would fit them for the battle of life. This educational work on the part of the clergy had a reflex action upon themselves, for it resulted in the raising up of a people whose reasoning powers were highly developed, and who were qualified to criticise and discuss the sermons addressed to them by their ministers.

When we remember the very limited supply of reading matter which was within the reach of the Scottish peasantry, and the very little leisure they had to peruse their small libraries, it is not to be wondered at that the sermons were looked forward to with something akin to the feeling with which we anticipate the issue of our favourite newspaper or magazine. There is no doubt that this keenly critical character of the hearers drove some ministers into a set form of preaching which certainly did not tend to their own mental growth, and fostered that love for the gloomy side of theology which was such a marked feature in many of the old Scottish sermons.

The strong objections of the people to the use of manuscript by the ministers, which was so general throughout Scotland, had the effect of stimulating and bringing out the powers of great preachers, but in many instances it had a dwarfing

effect upon those whose ability to study and memorise was very limited. Numerous stories are told of the attempts made by ministers to use manuscript without the knowledge of their hearers; but these efforts, in almost every case, resulted in failure. One method adopted was to have the paper, upon which the sermon was written, made exactly the size of the pages in the pulpit Bible; but, if there chanced to be a gallery overlooking the pulpit, it was not long before some sharp-eyed hearer discovered the difference between the distant appearance of printed and written matter. But surely the most extraordinary means to secure the desired end was devised by one minister who stood very much in awe of his critical hearers. He was observed to look very frequently to the floor of the pulpit, and to move about in a rather awkward manner. It was afterwards discovered that he had written out the notes of his sermon in large text, and had placed them where he could conveniently turn them over with his foot.

The hearers who stood out so strongly against the use of "the paper," as written sermons were generally called, had often to be content with "vain repetition" and the plentiful use of scriptural quotations. This adoption of set phrases and

portions of Scripture on the part of the preacher, both in sermons and prayers, became quite ritualistic, although the congregation would have been horrified at the mention of ritual in connection with their mode of worship. I remember one young clergyman who, when he entered upon his first charge, made use of manuscript, as he doubted his own powers for extempore preaching. This action of the new minister gave great offence to some of the older members of his flock, and those inclined to gossip did not spare him with their tongues, behind his back, of course. These things having come to the minister's knowledge, disturbed him not a little, but he decided to make an attempt at preaching without the aid of manuscript, and did so on the following Sunday. He was rather a blate young man, and consequently the intimation of his resolve to preach in future extempore was all the more surprising as it ended with these words: "And I trust that those who have had such strong objections to my use of manuscript will pay a little more attention to my discourses than they have been in the habit of doing."

I can recall one fine old Scottish minister who was gifted with rare powers for extempore speaking, and who was noted for his rich vein of humour.

As he did not use manuscript in the pulpit, it was all the more remarkable when one Sunday he appeared with a written copy of an old sermon; but all his hearers knew the reason. During the previous week he had come through much family trouble, and had been engaged up till a late hour on Saturday night, thus having no time to prepare a new discourse. The large majority of his congregation sympathised with their pastor, but one pugnacious old shoemaker, as soon as he saw the hated "paper," rose in his pew and, looking round the kirk, said, "Here I goes; follow me!" and marched boldly to the door. To the credit of the other members it may be added that, when the objector looked round to review his forces, he found that he was alone.

Although the production of sermons bulked so largely in the work of the Scottish minister, by reason of the mental demands of his hearers, he had still other duties to attend to, which often taxed his physical powers to the utmost. The members of his congregation were frequently scattered over a very wide area, owing to the sparsely populated character of many of the parishes, and consequently the visitation of the people in their homes occupied a large portion of

the pastor's time. The visit of the minister was looked forward to with mingled feelings by the bairns, who knew that they would have to undergo the usual catechising; but they were also aware that the clerical coat pockets contained a good supply of sweets or some other toothsome dainties, which were distributed after the questions had been answered. The catechising was not all on one side, however, for the minister often discovered that some old lady member of his congregation, who by reason of her infirmities was prevented from attending the kirk, devoted so much of her time to the study of the Bible that she was well qualified to discuss a difficult text or obscure passage with the most learned divines.

As a rule the Scottish minister knew what hard physical toil meant, for his parents were generally hard-working people who had denied themselves in every possible way, so that their children might have the benefit of a good, sound education, and that one of their sons might be a minister. Even sons of the manse were not nurtured in the lap of luxury, for it often happened that the minister had to work his glebe with his own hands, to enable him to provide the necessaries of life and a good education for his family, his stipend being fre-

A DIFFICULT TEXT

quently insufficient. This hard toil on the part of the ministers brought them into very close touch with the members of their congregations, and enabled them to understand and sympathise with the wants of the people in a way that no mere university training could accomplish. The children of the manse had thus the benefit of hard training, and were not handicapped with the modern curse of respectability, which causes such frantic attempts to start the sons where their fathers left off, parents forgetting that it was the struggle which gave the strength, and that those born at the top, if they move at all, are almost sure to go downwards.

So much has been written about the gloomy theology expounded from Scottish pulpits in the past that the impression has got abroad that the ministers were morose men, who frowned upon all amusements, and whose risible faculties could rarely be excited; but those who knew the Scottish pastors intimately could tell a different tale. Many of them had a keen sense of humour, and were acknowledged wits; but the very strong feeling of reverence in which they were held by the people made it necessary that these qualities should not have undue prominence in their daily walk and conversation.

It is questionable if any other country can equal Scotland for the number of its clergymen who have sprung from the peasant class, born in poverty, nurtured in hardship, and strengthened by endurance, while it is pleasing to recall the many names of eminent divines who have looked back with thankfulness to such lowly origins. They were men who could take an intensely human interest in the temporal affairs of their people, as well as being spiritual advisers of the highest order. Scotland owes much to her faithful ministers, and, though their portraits may not grace the walls of any national Valhalla, their quiet yet forceful lives and their kindly deeds have had an abiding influence on Scottish life and character.

Along the glen the preacher wends his way,
His raven locks now changed to silver grey;
With kindly words he enters many a door,
Or freely gives from his own humble store;
With mourning hearts he tastes the cup of woe—
A blessing follows where his footsteps go;
The erring ones he chides, but not in wrath—
While happy bairns shun not their pastor's path.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEVOUTNESS OF THE SCOTTISH PEOPLE

THE poet is supposed to be allowed some licence when presenting his theme, and the garment of pleasing verse in which it is arrayed is understood to cover up many imperfections. But no such allowance requires to be made when we read "The Cottar's Saturday Night," for in that exquisite poem Burns gives a faithful and unexaggerated picture of the life of a very large proportion of the Scottish peasantry of his day, and it might be well for us if we could lay aside a little of our modern restlessness and endeavour to follow the example of our forefathers as therein depicted. The regular observance of family worship in the households of Scotland had a restraining and calming influence upon the members of the family, and to a slackness in such observances at the present day may be attributed some of our difficulties when dealing with the youth of the community. Such influences,

all the more powerful because of their quietness, go down to the roots of things, and much of the admittedly high intelligence of the Scottish people is to be attributed to their familiarity with theology and their intimate knowledge of Scripture.

He who has experienced the privilege of a visit to a typical old Scottish family will never forget it. How merrily the crack is ca'd, as the night shades settle down on the landscape, and the glow in the western sky gives place to the ruddy light of the peat fire, which throws fantastic shadows on the earthen floor. The healthy, romping bairns are now gathered in from the brae-face and the burnside where they have spent the "gowden afternoon," and they now respectfully and quietly take their place in the family circle, where they listen to the animated conversation between their ain folk and the stranger; for the apparently reserved and unresponsive Scottish peasants can converse in a manner that is surprising to those who do not know them intimately. Story and anecdote follow in quick succession, but the mirth which is engendered thereby is marked by sound common-sense. The guidman has also opinions of his own on the affairs of Kirk and State, and his visitor is astonished at the keen logical reasoning displayed

by his host, as he discusses some important topic bearing on the welfare of the people. The conversation is never frivolous, even when it is at its merriest, and so there is no violent change when the father intimates that they will now have the "readin'," as family worship used to be called in Scotland. The scene has been so faithfully portrayed by our national bard, in the poem already referred to, that it would savour of impertinence to attempt any prose description ; but suffice it to say that much of the sterling worth of the true Scot is to be traced to this simple and intensely natural form of household devotion, while the reverential spirit instilled into the children has far-reaching effects. What we look upon as the primitive past was but the seed-time of the harvest which we are now reaping, while we ourselves but serve as progressive stepping-stones for future generations.

The guest, whose experiences we are now giving, after he has enjoyed a night of refreshing sleep, induced by the sharp northern air and a simple supper, is early astir, and prepares to accompany the guidman to his daily toil. Although the host protests that it would be better if his friend would "tak' a guid lang lie" when he has the chance, he is quite pleased to have a companion on his lonely walk, for

he believes in the truth of the old Scottish proverb which says that "Company is as guid as a coach." Whatever form his daily toil may take, he goes to it with a hearty good-will—a feeling which lightens the burden by half—and his visitor will discover that the Scotsman's devoutness enters into the affairs of daily life, and, though the toiler may not look upon it in that light, his daily task becomes an act of worship. A true single-hearted loyalty to religion secures an absence of scamping and jerry-building, straightforward dealings between master and man, and results in that feeling of security which is the very foundation of society.

Leaving the guidman to pursue his daily round, the visitor returns to the cottage and finds the family all astir. The hard-working mother is busy attending to the cow and the poultry, while the granny gets the little ones ready for school. Before they are allowed to partake of their simple breakfast the old woman "asks a blessing," as saying grace is termed in Scotland, and the bairns take up reverent attitudes while the few simple words are spoken. The acknowledgment of, and dependence on, a Higher Power in the matter of daily food is but an expansion of the family worship, and has also done not a little to keep

GRANNY'S BLESSING

alive the devout feeling in the hearts of the Scots.

It is on the Sabbath, however, that the visitor to the house of a Scottish peasant would see the family at their best, and be able to appreciate those quiet influences at work, which pass out in ever-widening circles from the household to the nation at large. Supposing then that our friend had spent a typical "Cottar's Saturday Night," and had enjoyed some hours of sound repose, he would find the family early in the morning preparing in a specially quiet and subdued manner for the various experiences of the hallowed day. The true Scot had an almost Jewish reverence for the first day of the week, and every possible piece of work was done on the previous evening. The bairns, whose faces have retained some of the sparkle of the brook in which they have been laved, are speedily dressed in their plain but substantial claes, and, all being in readiness, family worship is held, and the familiar notes of the old Psalm tunes are wafted on the breeze along the glen, until they blend with those arising from other cottages. The breakfast, though plain, is of a slightly different character from that of the other days of the week, so it is not to be wondered

at that the bairns, unaccustomed to dainty food, look forward to Sunday morning with pleasurable feelings, prompted probably more by healthy appetites than by any specially religious sentiments. Things have been so well arranged that all can "gang to the kirk," unless an infant is numbered among the members of the household, in which case the mother or one of the lassies has to stay at home. "Hae ye a' got yer pennies for the plate?" is the question which is asked before starting out, and to this carefulness, even among the poorest, in supporting the financial wants of the churches, is to be attributed the remarkable success of the Free Church of Scotland after the memorable Disruption.

As a rule Scotsmen do not appreciate to any great extent the symbolism of consecrated stone and lime, and yet our visitor must have been struck with the reverent manner in which the family entered God's house, and the almost painful stillness—unbroken by any organ voluntaries—which preceded the arrival of the minister. He generally walks from his manse near by in his pulpit gown, the beadle, full of the importance of his office, having gone on before to place the Bible and Psalm-book in the pulpit, and hold open the

door until the minister enters the rather narrow space allotted to him. This accomplished, the beadle closes the door and descends the pulpit stairs, while the precentor, whose elevation is only a little lower than that of the preacher, places the name of the selected Psalm tune on the end of a rod, which he turns round so that all the congregation can see it.

To refined musical ears the singing in old Scottish churches may have appeared uncultured and dirge-like, but there can be no doubt that it was an expression of the feelings of the people, whose religious sentiments were only permitted this one form of public utterance by the "use and wont" of the Presbyterian Church. Much has been written and said about the gloom and restraint of the Scottish Sabbath; but, while there may be much truth in such statements, there is just a danger that we may go too far in our endeavours to get away from these limitations. There was a calm restfulness that we miss nowadays, and, apart altogether from a religious point of view, it is great folly to deprive our physical frames of that "one day in seven" which seems to be a necessary law of our being.

After the "kirk skails," our friend may spend a

short time with the family, reading the inscriptions on the grave-stones which surround the church, and then they all walk quietly home to the simple dinner which has been simmering on a slow fire during their absence. The afternoon is devoted to the bairns, who are catechised regarding the sermon they heard, and the Shorter Catechism, texts of Scripture, and verses from the metrical Psalms are repeated from memory. This confining of the children indoors on the Sunday afternoon was often overdone, and had a depressing effect upon the juvenile mind. One sturdy boy, who was looking wistfully through the window into the little cottage garden, was heard to say, "I wish I was a cabbage." On being questioned as to this desire to join the vegetable kingdom, he replied, "Because I wad be oot."

A short walk in the evening would probably be all the exercise the host and his guest would indulge in, and an early retiral would close the day which began with—

Sweet hours of calm and quiet,
  When stormy passions cease,
And earthworn weary toilers
  Foretaste eternal peace.
O gentle time of stillness,
  That brings to hearts forlorn
The joy that aye attendeth
  The Scottish Sabbath morn.

CHAPTER V

THE COVENANTING SPIRIT

Two centuries and a half have passed away, and yet the Covenanting spirit is not extinct in Scotland. Though the natural bitterness which succeeded the "killing times" has been softened down, the same determined adherence to principle, and the same love of religious liberty, are as strong as ever in the hearts of the Scottish people. The same indomitable spirit, which characterised them as they passed through their great religious epochs, exists at the present day and demands but a cause and an opportunity to make itself known. Beginning with the Reformation in the sixteenth century, the purifying and consolidating of religious life in Scotland seems to require a crisis every century; for we have the Covenants in the seventeenth, the Secession and the Relief in the eighteenth, the Disruption in the nineteenth, and the Free *versus* U.F. in the twentieth.

Unbiassed students of church history, especially those belonging to other nations, must be struck by the thoroughness with which the various reforms were carried through, and will admire the noble character of the leaders of these movements. Poets, novelists, and painters have combined to represent these leaders as men of gloomy aspect, stern and unrelenting persons, in whom there seemed to be little of the milk of human kindness and an entire absence of humour. The nation at large, however, knows better and continues to cherish the honoured names of those who secured, too often by their death, the civil and religious liberty we now enjoy. When we consider the stern work they had to undertake, we cannot wonder at their adoption of stern methods, for no other mode of procedure would have accomplished the desired end; but it is a mistake to imagine that they were not as human as ordinary mortals. Very many of them were most lovable characters indeed, and, notwithstanding the great trials they passed through, were possessed of much humour and a ready wit.

How common it is to represent John Knox as a man of forbidding aspect, stern and unbending! And yet a little study of his life will show at once

that he was a man of wide sympathies and much humour. The quaint old volume of his *History of the Reformation of Religion within the Realm of Scotland*, which lies near me as I write, might not attract a casual reader; but dip into the book, and you will see every now and again that the apparent gloom is lightened up by the wit and humour of the author. Carlyle thus refers to this feature in the character of the great Reformer:—"Withal, unexpectedly enough, this Knox has a vein of drollery in him; which I like much, in combination with his other qualities. He has a true eye for the ridiculous. His *History*, with its rough earnestness, is curiously enlivened with this. A true, loving, illuminating laugh mounts up over his earnest visage—not a loud laugh, a laugh in the eyes most of all."

Had there been someone with a retentive memory and a ready pen to attend the cheery supper parties which Knox was wont to give in his house in the High Street, Edinburgh, and to record his "table talk," as was done in the case of Luther, what a different idea the world at large would form of his character! The fact is, John Knox was a highly cultured gentleman, else Edward VI. would not have appointed him to be

Royal Chaplain to what was then probably the stateliest court in Europe, nor would he have been offered the Bishopric of Rochester, with a seat in the House of Lords. The Scottish Reformation was the most thorough of all the Reformation movements of the time, much of its thoroughness being due to John Knox, and it must also be remembered that, complete though the reform was, not one drop of Catholic blood was shed in its accomplishment.

What has happened in the case of John Knox has also come about in regard to the Covenanters —they have been greatly misrepresented—and the world awaits some powerful novelist who will give us a true estimate of their character. Had Sir Walter Scott's life not burned itself out all too soon, through his magnificent fight to owe no man anything, it is possible that his magic pen would have been employed to present the Covenanters in a different light than he has done, for it is believed that towards the close of his life he gave expression to a regret that he had so represented them.

Notwithstanding the wide acceptation of these mistaken ideas, the tide has begun to turn, and several writers in recent times have done not a

little to show the humanity and humour which permeated the Scottish Reformers and Covenanters, and it is to be hoped that their able pens will do even more to dispel the mists of prejudice which have so long enshrouded the figures of the Covenanters in particular. We who are not so far removed from the Disruption, and can recall many of the leaders of it, know the humanity, pathos, and humour which characterised such men as Dr Chalmers and Dr Guthrie, and we have but to transplant them two centuries back to form a better estimate of what manner of men their Covenanting predecessors were. The bitterness and strife, which were the almost necessary accompaniments of such a great movement as the Disruption, having been mellowed down by time, and almost forgotten, even by those who in their old age can recall these stirring times, it becomes an easy matter for us to form a true estimate of the great struggle, and to admire the self-denial of the ministers who left their all for conscience' sake. It was the presence of the Covenanting spirit which made it possible, and, though the Reformers of the nineteenth century had not to face the terrible ordeals through which their forefathers passed, there can be little doubt that

the majority of them, had it been necessary, would have stood steadfast under similar tests.

In our day the middle walls of partition are being gradually pulled down, and the stream of brotherly love is slowly, but surely, filling all sections of the Christian Church. Yet in our joy at such a happy consummation we must not forget those who fought the battle of religious liberty in the distant past. The modern sections of the Presbyterian Church which were most closely allied to the Covenanters bore such names as Original Seceders, Auld Lichts, Cameronians, Reformed Presbyterians, etc.—now nearly all happily combined in the United Free Church of Scotland; but it matters not by what names they were called; they were men of sterling worth, and formed a stable portion of the community which could always be relied upon. Even their narrow-mindedness, which has been so often dwelt upon by those who have painted their portraits in the most sable hues, was the means of preserving much that is now prized by the nation at large and enjoyed by many who give no thought to the origin of their privileges.

Of necessity the fighting element was strongly developed in the Covenanters, and it is far from

AN AULD LICHT

being absent in their present-day descendants. The fighting, however, was always for what were considered to be principles of vital importance, though we may hold quite different opinions on some of the points at issue. The fear of innovation was often carried to extreme lengths, and the reverence for "things as they had been" occasionally prevented that natural progress which is as necessary in the religious world as it is in any other sphere of life. Yet brakes are necessary if the machinery of existence is not to get beyond our control, and apparent obstruction may result in true advancement.

A good many years ago I witnessed an amusing example of the combined fighting and reverential elements just referred to. It was in a West End concert hall in London, when a large audience, principally composed of London Scots, had assembled to listen to the songs of their fatherland, rendered by the popular Scottish vocalist, the late Mr Kennedy. The singer told a story in which he gave an excellent imitation of the old-time precentor's mode of "reading the line" and then singing it, which some of the older readers may remember. The performance was no burlesque and was carried through with Mr Kennedy's usual good taste. The audience applauded to the echo,

all except one lady in the body of the hall, whose hisses could not be drowned by the persistent applause. On being remonstrated with by someone behind her, she exclaimed: "I have as much right to express my opinion as *you*," and was only mollified when the singer, stepping to the front of the platform, assured her that he had no desire to turn into ridicule their fathers' mode of worship, but to show to the present generation the great advance which had been made in church praise.

I have endeavoured to show that the Covenanting spirit is far from being extinct, and that its presence among us, broadened and softened as it is by our happier surroundings, is a valuable asset to the nation.

The heroes of the Covenant
  Shall never be forgot,
And cherished will their fame still be
  By every loyal Scot.
What though their stone memorials
  Be levelled with the ground,
Deep graven on the Scottish heart
  Their record will be found.

CHAPTER VI

BUT AND BEN

THE aim of the historians, poets, and painters of the past seemed to be to represent a few prominent figures—very frequently much out of proportion—while the great mass of the people formed a dim and blurred background. Had we depended on these sources of information, we should have known little indeed of the common people; but patient research, resulting in the discovery of letters, diaries, church records, and town council minutes, has done much to supply vivid pictures of daily life in the olden time. In our own day the importance of the people is being more and more recognised, and therefore any historical picture, to be at all acceptable, must have the foreground well filled with the ordinary members of the community.

To describe the homes in some of the more

sequestered spots in Scotland, it is not necessary to search the records of the past, for, even at the present day, examples may be found of very simple conditions of life, while the memory of some old people can carry them back to a positively primitive state of affairs. Suppose, then, that we select one of the older types of Scottish peasant houses, not of the very poorest class, and endeavour to picture the daily life of its occupants. The dwelling stands apart from other houses and is surrounded by a small garden plot in which potatoes and the few ordinary vegetables used in Scottish households are growing, while one or two simple flowers, such as wallflower, sweet-william, nancy pretty, balm, southernwood, and thyme, keep the surroundings from being altogether prosaic. The cottage is whitewashed and exceedingly plain, but somehow it seems to harmonise with the scenery in a way that no other style of house-building will. To knock at the door would indicate common courtesy from our point of view, but it would probably put the inmates in a flutter of excitement, so we enter the open door and walk along the flag-stones of the short passage. At the end of this passage, or entry, as it is called, a ladder leads to the loft; but that portion of the dwelling, just under the thatched

roof, being only used for extra sleeping accommodation or as a lumber store, need not claim our attention. Lifting the latch of the door on our left, we enter the living-room or kitchen and find the good folks busily engaged, for there is little time for idleness in country homes, where so much depends upon individual labour. The guid-wife makes us welcome, but apologises for her inability to accept our proffered hand, as she is busy baking scones and has not had time to remove the dough from her fingers. The lassie, who sits peeling the potatoes which she has just washed in the burn, is instructed by her mother to "gang ben the hoose and fetch the guid chairs," but we protest and seat ourselves on the wooden settle by the side of the fireplace. Suspended from the "swee," the kail-pot hangs over the glowing peat fire, ready to receive the vegetables which the eident hands of the lassie will soon prepare. On the opposite side of the fireplace is the peat neuk, which plays the part of a coal scuttle and is replenished at intervals from the peat stack outside. The custom of whitewashing the sides and back of the fireplace heightens the effect of the fire, and gives an air of brightness to what might otherwise be a rather dull interior. One side of the apartment is

occupied by the box-beds which were to be found in all Scottish houses, and, though modern hygienic laws may condemn them, there can be no doubt as to their comfort. Sliding doors, neatly panelled in plain unpainted wood, kept scrupulously clean by frequent scouring, were a feature of these beds, and the closing of them during household operations accounts for the cleanness of the bedding, which surprises us by the height to which it is piled.

The dresser is evidently a most important part of the household furniture, for the pride with which the guidwife glances along the upper rack, with its goodly array of plates and painted bowls, is unmistakable. The press or cupboard in the corner of the apartment contains the scones, oat-cakes, butter, cheese, and milk of which we are invited to partake. The household work goes on even while we are there, as much has to be done before the guidman comes home at the gloaming. The lassie, having finished her preparation of the vegetables, takes the stoups from behind the door and goes to the spring for a "raik" of water, while her mother transfers the vegetables to the pot. The salt is procured from a small box with a circular opening and cover, which has been let into

the wall near the fireplace, a similar receptacle of larger dimensions being used for oatmeal, unless the cottage can boast of a meal ark. Above our heads, suspended from hooks fixed in the joists—for there is no proper ceiling—are several braxy hams, which add to the provender, especially in winter-time. After the kail-pot has "come through the boil," it is set to the side to simmer, while the girdle takes its place on the swee. The white, toothsome scones are soon fired and set on edge on the dresser, so that we may taste them before we go.

In one corner stands the large spinning-wheel upon which the woollen yarn is spun by the guidwife, and beside it lies a quantity of rowans ready for spinning. The bundle of wool, which will also be converted into rowans after having been carded by the hand cards, also awaits the deft fingers of the mother or daughter—for the young lassies are early taught the mysteries of carding and spinning. Some coloured wool shows that the mistress of the household is a dyer as well as a spinner, and there are no fears of the colours "running" during any future washings, as the dyes are all "fast," having been extracted from various herbs and mosses. As the weaver must

get the yarn on the morrow, the housewife, having emptied her last girdleful of scones, draws out the spinning-wheel, and soon we are admiring the skilful way in which she converts the long soft rowans into strong yarn, from which the knight of the shuttle will fabricate a "homespun" cloth which will stand the test of wear and tear.

A glance at the wag-at-the-wa' clock tells that the laddies will soon be in for their dinner, having doubtless got a good appetite from their work at casting the peats. The clock is evidently one of the household treasures, and it is quite possible that it is not long since its homely tick was added to the sounds to be heard in the cottage. Most likely the guidman and his spouse were brought up in homes where the only timekeeper was a sand-glass, which ran for five minutes and then had to be turned, a chalk mark being made on the back of the door each time this was done, while a cross mark indicated the hour when the twelfth turning was reached. On bright sunny days this tedious mode of timekeeping could be dispensed with, as one of the family could go outside and "step the shadow." This was done by standing erect, noticing carefully where the

THE SPINNING-WHEEL

shadow reached to, and then stepping the distance. By means of this living dial a very fair idea of the time could be obtained, noon, of course, being indicated by a practical absence of shadow. A glance through the little window shows us the boys coming up the brae, so we go "ben the hoose" till they have had their dinner, the mother explaining that they are "gey blate" before strangers.

South of the Tweed, "ben the hoose" would be dignified by the name of parlour, but in these northern lands the two apartments are distinguished by the words "but and ben." As soon as we are ushered into this portion of the dwelling, we feel that this is an inner sanctum which is only used on rare occasions. The chest of drawers, in all the glory of mahogany, faces us as we enter, and we feel that its numerous drawers contain the best "claes" of the household. In one of these receptacles the guidman's black coat and other portions of his Sunday attire lie neatly folded, while in another his wife's black silk gown is as carefully laid away; these garments, which were first used on the wedding day, will probably last a lifetime. What appears to be two small drawers is really a single deep one, where lies the guid-

wife's best bonnet, which may be quite fashionable for years to come. On the top of the chest of drawers lies the large family Bible, and such books as Boston's *Fourfold State* and *Crook in the Lot*, Baxter's *Saints' Rest*, Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, *Life of Colonel Gardiner*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and perchance a volume of Scottish history.

The polished birch chairs appear almost as new as when they left the workshop of the local wright many years ago, while the table is probably of equal quality, though hidden by its ornamental cover. There are box-beds here also, but their hangings, etc., clearly indicate that they are reserved for visitors or special occasions. A Scottish housewife among the peasant or working classes takes great delight in the "ben" part of her domicile, but personally makes little use of it. When special visitors come, however, the case is different, and they are received and entertained here until they tire of the unusual restrictions of company manners and find their way to the cheerier precincts of the kitchen. Even when the house has several apartments, the Scottish family has a fondness for the kitchen, and as a consequence that portion of the dwelling is more com-

modious in Scotland than in most other countries. The kitchen is the Scotsman's parlour, and most of his fondest memories are linked on to the scenes enacted there, when his heart was young and impressionable.

As we intend to return in the evening when the guidman is at hame, we do not further trespass on the busy housewife's precious time, but go down the brae and cross the wimpling burn, which seems to sing:—

A wee hoose in the North Countrie,
  Wi' clean and cosy but and ben,
Aft sends to lands far owre the sea
  The pick and wale o' honest men.
Yet though they rise to high estate
  And gather mickle gear and fame,
Or mingle freely wi' the great,
  The wee cot hoose is aye their hame.

CHAPTER VII

AT THE INGLE-SIDE

It cannot be denied that many of the Scottish people are not as affable and pleasant in their manners as could be desired, and yet that is only a surface matter, which may perhaps be accounted for by the historical fact that in distant times, when the country was almost continually at enmity or war with England, and internal factions were numerous, a cautious reserve had to be adopted as a mode of personal protection. From this apparent defect in Scottish manners doubtless arise many of the descriptions of the "dourness" which some writers seem to think is an inherent part of a Scotsman's character. Those who for this reason dislike the Scot "maun creep farther ben" before they can form a proper estimate of his real worth, and, to accomplish this, a visit to a Scottish family, when they are assembled round the domestic hearth in the evening, is absolutely necessary.

Having arranged to return in the evening to the cottage described in the preceding chapter, we start from our quarters in the village. But, instead of walking along the highway, we stroll leisurely by the bank of the stream, the smooth bosom of which reflects in varied combinations the restful green of the everlasting hills, the blue of the sky, and the passing whiteness of the fleecy cloud. High in the "lift" the lark sings his evensong, soaring higher and higher, as if desirous of catching the last glimpse of the setting sun. As we approach the cottage, the bairns, who are merrily playing in the mellow light, suddenly disappear behind a hedge; but, though we cannot see them, we know that several pairs of bonnie een are watching us through the foliage. Entering the cottage we find the kitchen apparently devoid of occupants; but the sound of heavy breathing draws our attention to a large chair at the ingle-side, where the guidman enjoys that sleep which tired nature demands. At this moment the guidwife enters and apologises for her absence and John's somnolence. In response to a shake from his spouse the sleeper awakes and begins to excuse himself, but we assure him that his drowsiness might be the envy of kings. One by one the

bairns come in and, after shyly accepting the sweets we have brought them, seat themselves on their "creepy" stools, the elder ones conning their lessons for the morrow.

While we chat with the guidman about the weather—generally the first topic in a Scottish conversation—and a number of subjects bearing upon farm and country life, a shadow darkens the doorway, and then the old Dominie enters. The kindly old man is always welcome—to the elders at any rate, for the children stand not a little in awe of him. His presence gives that tone to the converse which an educated and widely read man generally promotes. A few minutes later a ploughman drops in, but desires to retire at once, when he sees that the family has visitors. His explanation that he just came to have a game at the "dambrod," or draughts, with the guidman is not accepted as an excuse for his withdrawal, and we straightway challenge him to a game. Cards, or the "Deil's buiks," are rather tabooed in rural Scotland, but the intellectual effort necessary for the game of draughts has long had attractions for Scotsmen. The ploughman, who is a native of another district, is soon all animation, for we discover that we are well acquainted with his old

THE LIGHT OF THE HOME

home and many of his friends there. What a wonderful effect a word from or about an old friend has! The long years of our separation are at once bridged over, and our old age drops from us like an upper garment.

The long Scottish gloaming—Scotland enjoys a finer twilight than almost any other land—draws to a close, and the darkness brings into prominence the ruddy light of the glowing peat fire. A sound from a corner of the apartment draws our attention to the newly awakened baby, who looks from his cradle with wondering eyes at the strange faces. The little mouth is just forming for a good cry, when the father lifts "the light of the home" and holds him aloft in his strong arms, a movement with which master baby seems to be familiar, for he crows with delight. The candles are now lit, and the boys, who have been assisting their elder sister with her work in the byre, etc., take now their place in the family circle. The confidence of baby has been so far restored that he is transferred to the knee of the kindly Dominie, who entertains him and the other bairns by opening up his huge old verge watch and displaying the mystery of the moving wheels. The mother, glad to sit down, but incapable of doing nothing, joins the circle

and adds the click of her knitting-needles to the hum of conversation, while the eldest daughter, a comely lass well on in her "teens," follows her example, as soon as she has put the large pot of potatoes on the fire—for "champit tatties" and milk are to constitute the usual favourite and satisfying supper.

The game of "dambrod" being finished and the social circle complete, the crack becomes general, all joining in, except the children, who are allowed to sit up later than usual. The Dominie can tell a good story, and this draws out the guidman and the ploughman, who evince a rich vein of quiet humour in the anecdotes they relate. As the mirth becomes general, it is suddenly broken in upon by a wee lassie, whose "creepy" is placed near the fireplace, exclaiming, "Eh, mither! the pot's awa' up the lum." All eyes are turned in the direction of the fire, which sure enough is minus the large pot which rested upon it a few moments previously. Fear, born of many ghost stories and a belief in the visible effects of Satanic agency, is depicted on most faces, and is in no way dispelled by an eldrich screech of laughter which seems to come from the back window. Calmness is restored, however, by the Dominie, who remarks, "That'll be another trick

o' that deil o' a laddie, Tam Dickson. I saw him hangin' aboot as I cam' up the brae." A cautious examination is made of the wide chimney, where the missing pot is seen suspended half-way up. This piece of harmless mischief was accomplished by letting a rope, with a hook at the end of it, down the chimney till it reached the handle of the pot. To pull the rope cautiously up and fix it to a stick placed across the chimney top was an easy matter, the culprits thereafter dropping from the low roof near the back window, through which they could witness the effect of their practical joke.

The pot having been rescued, and the contents, thanks to the well-fitting lid, found to be free from soot, order is once more restored, and a song is proposed. Jeannie, the eldest daughter, protests that she "canna sing," but the promise of a violin accompaniment by her father gains her consent, and we are soon listening to a simple rendering of one of those sweet heart-songs which have made Scotland famous as a land of song. All national songs, whether they be gloriously grand or sweetly simple, are priceless gifts to the world, and we owe a deep debt of gratitude to the men and women who, by wedding the gems of ancient melody to suitable words, have preserved them for all time.

Jeannie's effort is but the start of quite a little concert, in which all present join, the sweet treble of the children blending with the deeper tones of the elders.

The warning stroke of the wag-at-the-wa' clock is the signal for the appearance of a large dish of well-beaten potatoes and plenty of sweet milk. After we have partaken heartily of this wholesome fare, we find that "elders' 'oors" have been reached, and so with many a hearty "guid nicht" we step out into the moonlight, which now transforms the landscape and changes the stream to a broad band of silver. The eerie hoot of the owl in the dark pine wood only serves to accentuate the deep silence which rests over all nature and folds the hamlet in a garment of sleep.

When night steals down over valley and hill,
And the village clock tells it is late,
Sweet dreams of the past our beating hearts fill,
When the fire burns low in the grate.
'Tis then we forget all the trouble and strife,
And soft music fills the night air,
As fondly we dream of our early life,
When our happy hearts knew not a care.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BAIRNS

The world never grows old, and Nature loses none of her freshness when gazed upon by the wondering eyes of new generations. He that is aweary of life, and thinks that he can never recall in the slightest degree the joys of his early days, has but to look into the eyes of a little child, or watch him and his companions playing on some sunlit meadow or heathery brae, to realise by his quickened pulse that his own youth is perennial, though the spring may be hidden by the overgrowth of years. The natural child is practically the same all the world over, and, if left to himself, will find amusement in much the same way, no matter what his surroundings are. The child of the palace will turn away from expensive toys to make a mud pie or nurse a rag doll with as keen delight as the cottar's bairn will indulge in the same inexpensive amusements.

In the matter of toys and toy-books the children

of the present day have advantages which were never dreamt of by the bairns of a past generation. It is doubtful, however, if a plenitude of toys is really an advantage to a child, for it is just possible that the inventive and constructive faculties may be dwarfed and stunted when everything is supplied ready made. The bairns of long ago were compelled to draw largely upon their own resources, and by this means they frequently got a technical training which stood them in good stead in after years. But apart altogether from such aids to amusement, the free open-air life and contact with Nature, which country children at least enjoy, is almost sufficient to fill up their cup of happiness.

What toys can surpass the daisy, the buttercup or the bluebell, the downy heads of the thistle and dandelion, the reeds from the river or the rowans from the tree? The butterfly and the grasshopper, whose elusive flight is more thrilling to the youthful heart than is the chase to the huntsman, are sources of endless delight. What pure joy is to be found in watching the foam-bells on the surface of the brook, until the mossy bank on which the bairns sit seems to be moving in an opposite direction to the limpid waters in whose depths the shy trouts dart from stone to stone! The noisy

crows circling overhead, or holding their mysterious conclaves in some upland field, the varied notes of the forest choir, or the clear trill of the soaring lark, the humming bees returning to the hive laden with honey from heather or clover—all contribute to the joy and pleasure of the country bairns.

Although there is a strong similarity among the young children of all nations, it is not long before environment has an effect upon the susceptible minds and hearts of the young, and the special characteristics of the nation are thus strengthened and perpetuated. The bairns of Scotland in the past were deprived of many of the softening influences which the children of some other nations enjoyed. Owing to the strong religious objection of the majority of the people to anything in the form of Church festivals, the pure delights of Christmas and Easter were practically unknown, while the beauty of flower services and harvest thanksgivings was undreamt of in connection with the Scottish form of worship, which must often have appeared gloomy and colourless to the juvenile mind. But the bairns had their compensations, for the hardening and strengthening effects of our variable climate enabled them to take part in out-of-door games with a relish and vigour which are denied

to the children of countries where summer skies prevail.

Though Church festivals were unknown, there were the joys of Hogmanay and New Year, and the mirth and mystery of Hallowe'en. The possibilities of a wider world than their own little glen or village were seen at the annual fair, which was held in the nearest town. To be old enough to go to the fair was looked upon as no ordinary privilege, and great indeed was the wonder and delight of the juvenile who for the first time gazed upon the wonderful array of white tents, the flaunting colours of the shows, or the tempting contents of the krames. The few coppers, which were perhaps the savings of months, had to be very carefully expended, for great were the inducements to "ware" them all upon some attractive sweetmeat or toy, or to speculate on the delusive promises of the wheel of fortune. The presence of the father or some adult member of the family generally prevented any foolish expenditure, and so, when the little company reluctantly left behind them the delights of the fair, everyone had something to carry home as a "fairing" to those who were unable to be with them. The arrival of a new toy in the little cottage was an event, and if it

THE NEW TOY

happened to take the form of that old-fashioned toy, the "jumping jack," the antics of the wooden man would send the youngest bairn into ecstasies.

It was in connection with their school life, however, that Scottish children were seen at their best, for though the curriculum was often severe, they went to school each morning well prepared. The parents, as a rule, looked upon the home preparation of lessons as a sacred duty, and were never too tired to assist their offspring in acquiring the rudiments of that education which was so highly prized by the nation at large. Surprise is sometimes expressed at the success of the old-time Dominie in turning out scholars who brought fame in after years to their native place, but it must not be forgot how ably he was assisted by the parents in this important matter of home preparation. Thus prepared at home and efficiently taught at school, the Scottish schoolboy had all the more zest for the thrilling joys of the playhour.

With what earnestness did they throw themselves into the running game of "Scotch and English," or the less lengthened races required in "crinky" and "cross tig"! How carefully the woods, hedges, and hazel copse were searched for suitable "shinties," and, when these had been procured,

with what recklessness were they used when the game of "shinty" was engaged in! It was no sport for weaklings, for, though there was not the roughness which is to be seen in some of our present-day football matches, there was sufficient danger to shins and heads to make the game very exciting. Each season had its own particular games, which seemed to come in their proper rotation in obedience to some unwritten law; for any attempt to discover which boy started the "bools," "peeries," "fleein' dragons," etc., generally resulted in failure.

The girls were not allowed to take part in any of the boys' sports, although the latter occasionally joined in the play of their fair companions. In its season, that hopping game known as "hop Scotch," probably from its Scottish origin, but known in Scotland itself by the various names of "beds," "pallaly," "peevers," "pitchers," etc., held complete sway over the lassies, while at other times the advancing and retiring games, with their quaint old rhymes, were indulged in. The circle games in which both girls and boys could join and sing "Here's a poor widow from Babylon," "I sent a letter to my love," "See the robbers passing by," etc., were especially popular, as they gave oppor-

tunities for those little sweetheart partialities which are so beautifully referred to by Whittier in his poem "In School Days."

The subject of school life in Scotland is a tempting one, and volumes of interesting matter might be written upon the old Dominies and their pupils, for the individualities of master and scholar were formerly more marked than they are at the present day. There was on the part of both parents and teacher a firm belief in the proverb, "Spare the rod and spoil the child," so the dull or lazy scholar had rather a hard time of it. But there was one day in the twelvemonth, the "Barrin' oot day," when the pupils had the upper hand, and the master discovered that he was not omnipotent. On the shortest day of the year, the 21st December, the scholars were wont to gain access to the schoolroom before the usual time, and to bolt and bar the door from the inside. The master on his arrival made a show of anger and demanded admittance, but capitulation was only obtained on his agreeing to the day being observed as a holiday.

In summer-time the majority of children went to school barefooted, and though this picturesque and healthy habit resulted in considerable saving of stockings and shoe-leather, it arose more from the

keen delight the bairns took in their sense of freedom than from any economical considerations on the part of the parents. In country districts the school holidays were always arranged so that the elder children might assist in the harvest field, their nimble fingers being easily trained to make bands for the sheaves and do other light work. After the stooks had been removed from the fields, the younger children were allowed to glean, or "gather singlings," as it was called, and those whose parents did not keep poultry disposed of the results of their labour to those who did. A "singling" was the number of corn-stalks which could be "spanged," a pithy Scottish word which means to encircle with the forefinger and the thumb. These "singlings" had a marketable value, but the bairns were generally surprised to find that the "spang" of the henwife with whom they were bargaining was considerably larger than their own, and so the payment was proportionally smaller than they had expected.

In winter the frozen lochs or flooded haughs provided ample scope for outdoor enjoyment to boys and girls alike, while the former varied their pleasure by organising miniature Waterloos, where snowballs formed the ammunition. The closing

nights of the year were devoted to "guisarding," or going from house to house dressed in various disguises, acting little plays and singing songs. But the last day of the calendar, Hogmanay, was the great festival of the Scottish bairns. Before daybreak on that eventful morn, the shrill voices of the children were heard ringing through the frosty air, as they sang their simple rhymes before the doors of the better-class houses in the district. The occupants were generally prepared for their youthful visitors, and cakes, apples, etc., were handed out to each bairn, who carried a large bag—a white pillow-slip being the most popular receptacle.

To the Scot this subject will recall fond memories of the days "when we were at the schule," while the stranger may be induced to make further excursions into the literature of Scottish life.

When Faither Time gaes hirplin' doon life's hillside,
And locks, ance raven, noo are white as snaw,
We'll keep oor hearts frae growin' sad and weary
Wi' thinkin' o' the days sae lang awa'.
The bairnies wi' their laughin' and their daffin'
Will help us to forget lang days o' pain;
The sangs they sing when saftly fa's the gloamin'
Will make us live oor youthfu' days again.

CHAPTER IX

FAMILY RELATIONS

In Scottish songs and poems the word "freend" or "freen'" is the equivalent of the English "friend," but in the ordinary speech of the people it generally refers to a relative by blood or marriage; hence the common proverb "Freends 'gree best separate" is but a shrewd Scotsman's mode of expressing the well-known fact that, though "blood is thicker than water," it does not keep relatives from quarrelling among themselves. The proverb refers more particularly to separate families than to the members of one household, for the latter, as long as they remain under the paternal roof, are supposed to have that community of interests which prevents any serious differences. In such a household "sons as plants grow up in their youth, and their daughters as corner stones polished after the similitude of a palace." The home may be of the humblest description, and the

struggle of the family against poverty may be hard and unceasing, yet the annals of such lives contain the very poetry of existence.

From homes like these have come many of Scotland's great ones, and the biographies of the majority of our best preachers, poets, painters, philosophers, and princes of industry contain details of their early struggles against poverty—a training of inestimable value to them in the years of their success and prosperity. As a rule, the man who has been so trained takes a firmer grip of life's problems than he who has inherited the fruit of another's toil, and can sympathise more fully with his brethren who are passing through the valley of tribulation. The records of such "self-help" lives prove an incentive and encouragement to succeeding generations. Who that has reached middle life does not remember the inspiration he received from his first perusal of *Self-Help*, by the late Dr Smiles? for when the book was first published it came with a freshness which is almost unattainable in these days of personal interviewing. That eminent Scottish author did an incalculable amount of good by laying before the world, in an attractive form, the salient features in the lives of so many men who had risen from the ranks to positions of

eminence. The lives as placed before the readers were practically expansions of the Book of Proverbs, which used to bulk so largely in the education of Scottish children. The world owes much to its biographers, who, by painstaking research, introspective study, and careful sifting, present the life stories of the great ones in such a concise form that they can be known and read of all men, while their footprints on the sands of time are thus rendered indelible.

Before the days of railways, and the many other means of intercommunication which we now enjoy, many of the Scottish villages were almost isolated from the outer world, and as a consequence the advent of a stranger was a rare occurrence. Such a visitor would very soon discover that freedom of speech in regard to the personality or character of any of the villagers was almost impossible, for by frequent intermarriages they were nearly all blood relations. They might quarrel among themselves, and observe the unwritten laws of caste so as to appear as strangers to one another; but the moment an outsider gave expression to a remark derogatory to any member of the small community, he incurred the enmity of all. People so isolated may have limited ideas of citizenship, and their

HER DOCHTER'S BAIRN

political influence may be infinitesimal, yet their very separation from outside influence makes everyone a complete man in himself, and from him goes out a force which in the aggregate affects the whole nation.

Nearly everyone has heard of the "clannishness" of the Scottish people, but a casual observer might be inclined to doubt this national cohesiveness, if he judged from the standpoint of the family unit, where there is an apparent absence of family affection. But this is just another instance of the necessity of creeping "farther ben," before we can thoroughly understand Scottish character, for the Scot seldom "wears his heart on his sleeve," and has a strong objection to a public expression of affection. There is no doubt that this chariness in giving visible signs of natural affection was carried to extreme lengths in many cases; but in these later days we have decidedly improved in such matters, and even the old people who were accustomed to the former order of things feel the softening influence of expressed affection, and the Granny will lavish a wealth of loving words on "her dochter's bairn," which the dochter when a child did not enjoy.

Those who belong to nations where there are no

restrictions put upon the expression of affection will hardly believe it possible that any married woman could lead a happy life and never receive a kiss from her husband; yet a very large number of Scottish wives in the past had that experience. Though they seemed to take this as a matter of course, and were happy and contented, they would likely have been all the better pleased had the undoubted affection of their husbands been more openly expressed. Not a few Scottish anecdotes, humorous and pathetic, refer to this subject, and one of the latter tells how a husband of the foregoing description kissed his wife for the first time when she was on her deathbed, and told her how he had loved her during the years of their married life. The reply of the dying Scotswoman was a characteristic one: "Ye've been unco lang in telling me, John."

There was a general objection to the use of the word "love," as well as a meagreness in giving visible tokens of affection; and though a Scottish wooer might *sing* that he "lo'ed" the object of his affections, he would most probably *say* to her, "I like ye," thus giving the verb a deeper meaning than it has in English. What the Scottish lover lacks in expression, he generally makes up for in

constancy. Long engagements are not at all uncommon, and the pathos of "We'd better bide a wee" is fully understood all over Scotland. Self-sacrifice and restraint for the sake of the old folk are virtues which may be found in all ranks of Scottish society, but particularly among the peasant and working classes.

Though in recent years the intercourse among relatives in Scotland has apparently become more cordial, and the expression of affection more pronounced, it can still be said of us that—

> We're aye sae fear'd to speak oor mind,
> As if a word oor life wad bind,
> Or kindly smile some hank unwind
> To trip oor feet.
> The fremd folk think us grim an' sour,
> And harden'd fast 'gainst freendship's power—
> But Scotsmen's hearts in trial's hour
> Glow like a peat.

CHAPTER X

THE AULD FOLK

The character and worth of a nation can be seen to some extent in the treatment which the aged members of the community receive at the hands of the younger generation. Judged from this standpoint Scotland ranks very high indeed, for even among the poorest great efforts are put forth to supply the wants of the old folks, the dread of the poorhouse being very strongly developed in the national heart. Those who are blessed with every comfort may sometimes be inclined to think that poverty has a hardening effect, but the gossamer thread is not more sensitive to the autumn breeze than are the hearts of the poor to the finer feelings.

The Granny has played such a prominent part in Scottish song and story, that one might almost imagine that these old ladies were more plentiful in

the past than they are now. As we think of the old homes, we can hardly picture the family circle without the presence of Granny in her soo-backit mutch, spotlessly clean and carefully ironed in all its wonderful convolutions of snowy linen. She was generally known by the name she bore prior to marriage, for in days not so far distant wedded women in Scotland, especially if they were natives of the place where they spent their married life, continued to be called by their maiden names. To such an extent was this sometimes carried, that, in cases where the wife had a stronger personality than her husband, he was known as "Jean Tamson's man," or whatever her maiden name chanced to be, while the children also bore the mother's name. So common was this practice that anyone inquiring for a married woman or any of her children, by the surname which the marriage law had provided for them, would experience much difficulty in getting the desired information, as the neighbours were so unaccustomed to hearing the new name that it seemed quite strange to them.

Her thoughts turning naturally so much to the past, the Granny of course considered that there had been a great falling away in many respects

since her young days; but this did not prevent her from taking a great interest in the living present, especially if that present included her own grandchildren. She belonged to a time when the belief in fairies, witches, ghosts, etc., had a firm hold upon the people, and so the stories she told the children, as they sat spellbound around her chair, were full of that poetic fire and imagination which are so often lacking in present-day tales.

To have expressed disbelief in those old-world tales and superstitions was enough to cause the doubter to be ranked among freethinkers and irreligious people, and cases are on record where the offending one has been brought before the Church courts to stand his trial for unbelief. Though we cannot but rejoice at the advancing education which makes witches and warlocks impossible, we almost regret the disappearance of the fairies from our meadows, the brownies from our glens, and the kelpies from our streams; yet are they not still to be found in the imperishable pages of Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd?

In all their little sorrows the bairns found a ready sympathiser in their grandmother, whose "Come to Granny" was an invitation understood and acted upon even by the youngest. Another great

COME TO GRANNY

attraction for the children was the large pocket, often made of leather, which she wore under her dress, for in its capacious depths were stored a number of odds and ends which were a continual source of delight to the bairns.

In the households of the middle and upper classes the grandmother occupied a prominent position, and held the same opinions as her humbler sisters on modern matters. Seated in the drawing-room, arrayed in a stiff silk gown, black silk mitts, Shetland shawl, and white cap, the silver-haired old lady gave to the apartment that stately air which always accompanied the dames of the old régime. She spoke the "braid Scots" in all its purity, and the tones of our beautiful Doric seemed to be quite in keeping with her gentle and refined manners.

Although many of the older words used in Scotland are disappearing, it will be a long time before the common speech of the people is completely assimilated to English. When this is accomplished the world will have lost one of its most musical languages, for we have it on the evidence of the late Professor Max Müller, the greatest modern authority on language, that the lowland tongue of Scotland is the finest medium

in the world for the expression of poetic sentiment. This being so, the greater is the pity that many of our present-day novelists and story-writers pay little or no attention to the proper spelling of the Doric, each one being a law unto himself. The results are absurd, not to say disastrous, and give point to the story of the proof-reader who applied for work at a large publishing house and was informed that they had dismissed all their proof-readers, as the firm was now publishing nothing but "Kailyard" stories.

Lord Brougham, in his installation address as Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh, said:— "The pure and classical language of Scotland must on no account be regarded as a provincial dialect, any more than French was so regarded in the reign of Henry V., or Italian in that of the first Napoleon, or Greek under the Roman Empire. Nor is it to be in any manner of way considered as a corruption of the Saxon; on the contrary, it contains much of the old and genuine Saxon, with an intermixture from the northern nations, as Danes and Norse, and some, though a small portion, from the Celtic. But in whatever way composed, or from whatever sources arising, it is a national language used by the whole people in

their early years, by many learned and gifted persons throughout life, and in which are written the laws of the Scotch, their judicial proceedings, their ancient history, above all, their poetry.

"There can be no doubt that the English language would greatly gain by being enriched by a number both of words and of phrases, or turns of expression, now peculiar to the Scotch. It was by such a process that the Greek became the first of tongues, as well written as spoken."

Whether it was that the grandfathers had less poetry in their natures, or that the hard toils through which they had passed had taken it out of them, it is a fact that they seemed to hold a subordinate place to the grannies, and are much less frequently mentioned in song and story. The old man was content to smoke the pipe of peace in the chimney corner, recall the Waterloo days, the year of the short corn, etc., or go out to the house-end occasionally to "look at the weather" and prognosticate coming climatic conditions. Spending much of his life in the open air, the grandfather had become weatherwise to a degree that might be the envy of the savants of our

Meteorological Office, and his forecasts were in most cases quite as reliable as those which are now published daily in the newspapers. He did not depend for his data upon the highly sensitive instruments used by meteorologists, but by closely observing the natural objects around him he was enabled to foretell from the changes and modifications in their appearance the probable weather.

Frequently passing the "allotted span," the auld folk see one by one of their old friends disappearing from their view, and it is little wonder if there is a touch of sad regret in their voice as they say :—

They're slowly slippin' frae oor ken—
The freends we lo'ed sae weel,
As mists in autumn gloamin's fa'
Alang the valleys steal;
And though the day's last rosy beam
May licht some lofty Ben,
The shadows seem to deeper grow
Within the wooded glen.

CHAPTER XI

HAMELY FARE

"WHAT though on hamely fare we dine" has been sung and applauded at countless Burns suppers by thousands who were not dining on hamely fare, and who had no personal experience of a limited larder, though they might admire the nobility of the song from which the words are quoted.

In these days, when the fruits of other climes find their way even into remote villages, it is very difficult for the present generation to imagine the simple fare which pleased our fathers. Among the staple foods of the Scottish peasants may be mentioned porridge, kail, potatoes, oatcakes, pease bannocks, barley scones and wheaten flour scones, sowans, milk, butter and cheese. The first-mentioned has been immortalised by Burns in "Halesome parritch, chief o' Scotia's food," which a German poet by a curious mistranslation has rendered, "A partridge as is pleasing to the Scots." "Kail" was a thick, nourishing broth composed of

common vegetables, including the kail or curly green. Both of these dishes are still well known at the present day, but "sowans," once extensively used in Scotland, is now rarely seen. It is made from the husks of oats, which contain much farinaceous matter. These are soaked in water for several days until the whole turns sour, when the liquid is poured off and boiled till it thickens. This national dish could be made very palatable, and one Englishman was so impressed with this that on his return to the South he thus described to his friends this marvel of Scottish cookery: "The lady of the house boiled some dirty water in a pan, and by the blessing of God it came out a fine pudding."

Oatmeal brose was another favourite dish, and had the great advantage of requiring no cooking, the pouring of hot water on the raw meal being the whole process. To the Southern who does not understand the delights of "brose and butter," the dish may seem barbaric, and be an ample justification of Dr Johnson's dictionary definition of "oats." But even at the present day there are thousands of Scots who prefer the "bowl o' brose" to much more elaborate dishes. While a too frequent use of oatmeal had a heating effect upon the blood, the

evil could be neutralised by another dish—pease-meal brose—which was common in some parts of Scotland. The nourishing and beautifying qualities of this dish were probably known to the "three Hebrew youths" in ancient Babylon, who would doubtless be well acquainted with pulse in such a palatable form.

The corn from which the oatmeal was prepared was ground at the nearest mill, but in some inaccessible spots the use of the hand-querns was not unknown. These "primeval mills of the world" are not very numerous in Scotland, owing to the decree of Alexander III. and subsequent legislation. The object of such measures was to force the people to take their grain to the mills which had been erected all over the country, and to accomplish this it was decided to render the use of hand-mills or querns illegal. "Nae man," says the decree, "sall presume to grind quekit, maish-lock, or rye, hand-mylne, except he be compelled by storme, or bein lack of mills, quihilk soulde grinde the samen; and in this case, gif a man grindes at hand-mylnes, he sall gif the threllin measure as milture; gif any man contraveins this, our proclamation, he sall tyne his mill perpetuallie."

In many districts the querns were as keenly

sought after and destroyed by the millers and their agents as private stills were by the Excise officers at a much later date. But it is not difficult for the people to evade what they consider to be an unjust law, and so not a few of the precious "hand-mylnes" were successfully hidden, only to be secretly produced and used or lent out as occasion demanded. The importance of querns was recognised by the Israelites, who were not allowed to seize them for debt, the command being, "No man shall take the upper or the lower millstone to pledge: for he taketh the man's life to pledge."

The quern grinding was preceded by the heating of the corn in an iron pot, or by some similar contrivance, and as soon as the grain was crisp enough the two stones were brought into use. Two women, who sat facing each other on the ground, generally acted as millers. Into the side of the upper stone, which had a hole in the centre, a wooden handle was fixed, and the stone was turned by means of this handle being pushed from one to the other, the corn being poured from time to time into the hole at the top. The monotonous action was generally accompanied by a low crooning song or quern-lilt, which suggests the customs of Eastern women, who "warbled as they ground the parched corn."

GRANNY'S COMFORT

Although butcher meat was much cheaper than now, it was only used at long intervals in many households, and so the Scots were almost vegetarians. Tea was used secretly, and the "tea-caddy" was hidden more carefully than the decanter is nowadays. The granny might be excused for finding comfort in the teacup, but woe betide the peasant's wife who was discovered indulging in the amber liquid!—the tongue of scandal would wag freely regarding her extravagant weakness.

Many of the food utensils were made of wood, and the bicker-maker was a recognised calling. The "luggies" used by the bairns were of very neat construction, and resembled a toy tub with one of the staves made double length, so as to form a handle. They were frequently constructed with a double bottom, to admit of the insertion of some small pebbles, which produced a rattling sound when the luggie was shaken by the delighted bairn who owned it. Metal spoons were seldom used, so the manufacture of horn ones was quite an extensive industry. These spoons, when new, were not at all unpleasant to the mouth, but after they had been in use for some time, their rough edges did not add to the pleasures of the table. Occasionally the handle would become twisted, which rendered the operation

of supping rather difficult. One such spoon I remember, which was only used when an extra number sat down to dinner. It had a very decided twist, and was generally reserved for one of the family who knew how to use it. If it chanced, however, to fall into the hands of a stranger, he would be surprised to find that his first spoonful of kail did not reach its proper destination, but flowed along the grooved part of the handle and discharged itself from the end.

There can be no doubt that the strength and endurance of the Scots may be traced in some degree to the few simple, nourishing foods which formed the common fare of the people for so many generations. Even in these days of bewildering variety in viands and cookery, homely fare is not to be despised, and they are wise parents who endow their children with the rich inheritance of simple tastes.

The peasant when he home returns,
  Aweary with his constant toil,
Beholds upon his table spread
  The fruits drawn from a stubborn soil.
The simple feast brings health and joy—
  For sweet contentment lingers there—
And pampered palates might desire
  His relish for the homely fare.

CHAPTER XII

THE PROVIDING

THE love ballads of Scotland are very numerous, and they take a high place among the world's songs of the affections; and yet a stranger, who visited Scotland in the past, might have been excused had he reported that courtship was almost unknown among the Scottish people. There were few outward signs of love-making among the young folks, and the parents seemed to give no encouragement to any attachments that might be formed. But love as usual laughs at such restraints, and the mild dissimulation expressed in the line, "Look as ye werena lookin' at me," was carried out most effectively.

This real or assumed objection to open and expressed love-making on the part of the young folks was a very real trait in the Scottish character, and probably arose from a variety of causes. The severer side of religion had taken a firm grip of

the popular mind, and all that savoured of worldly pleasure was often looked at with doubts and misgivings, if not met with positive opposition and, where possible, prohibition. The people believed strongly in the power of original sin, and they were apt to think that the natural impulses of the human heart were placed there only to be curbed and chastened. Of course this led to much hypocrisy and deception, and when the elders frowned upon the young folks for obeying the promptings of their hearts, the latter were quite justified in saying: "They forget they were ance young theirsel's." The lovers, of course, generally found ways and means to circumvent the restrictions of the old folks, and Scottish love songs are full of references to the delights of secret meetings "beneath the spreading birk in the dell without a name," on "the lea rig," or under the soft rays of the harvest moon "amang the rigs o' barley." We are gradually getting away from the hole-and-corner courtship which was such a pronounced feature of Scottish life, and the nation is the better for the change; but it is to be feared that we have gone back somewhat in the matter of preparing for "taking up house."

The Scottish lassie of the past began early to

LEISURE MOMENTS

make her "providing," against the day when she would "hae a hoose o' her ain," and she might have sat for the portrait of the provident woman, as sketched by Solomon: "She seeks wool and flax, ... she lays her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff." As a rule the Scottish maiden could spin, and not unfrequently weave as well, so that the linen and woollen garments which she gradually accumulated were her own manufacture from beginning to end. Needlework was not a lost art then, and her leisure moments were devoted to the fabrication of those articles of wearing apparel which would be found useful, no matter what her future lot might be. Each piece, as it was completed, was stored carefully away in her "kist" or chest, where fragrant herbs prevented the inroads of moths, while her few trinkets, ribbons, etc., were placed in the "shottle" or small box fixed inside at one end of the chest.

This providence on the part of the maidens of Scotland finds its counterpart in some other nations, especially in Germany, where the accumulation of household linen results in an almost embarrassing collection of these riches so dear to the female heart. Schiller, in his "Song of the

Bell," gives a full and highly poetic description of this admirable trait in German women, who in many ways resemble the maids and matrons of Scotland. These preparations for the future are also common in Eastern climes, and the Jewish maidens, from Biblical times down to the present day, have proceeded on much the same lines as their sisters of the West. The custom prevailed also to some extent in England, where even ladies of high rank were not considered fit to enter the matrimonial state until they had spun as much flax as was required for the bed furnishings. Owing to this they, until they were married, were called "spinsters," which name they still bear in all legal documents and in the banns of marriage. The English women got off easily compared to the German fräuleins, who, when white cotton stockings were fashionable, were expected to knit a bushelful of them, in addition to all the other "providing," before they assumed the rôle of matrons.

Inheriting such influences from generations of thrifty Scottish wives, and following the bent of her own careful disposition, the Scottish lassie's nimble fingers kept adding at every opportunity to the "providing," even though she had no

prospects of marriage; but how much more heartily was the work taken up when the golden thread of love entered the warp and woof of life! Then she looked upon the contents of her kist with different eyes, and may have been heard murmuring to herself, "How proud he'll be to see a' this!"

The accepted lover may have uttered no word of affection, but the "blythe blink" has spoken more eloquently than any language, and she feels as firmly bound to him as if she had gone through a ceremonial engagement. Ever active, she now goes about her daily toil with a lightness and brightness which are born of the new-found joy in her heart. The songs she sings are now changed to duets, for the undertones of love are added to the lilts she sang without thinking much of their meaning. Her eyes are now opened to the natural beauties which surround her, and even the rain-drookit gowan, as it slowly unfolds to the returning sunlight, attracts her attention and fills her heart with unspoken poems. Small additions are made to the "shottle o' her kist," such as a sprig of heather, a dried flower, "the bonnie blue ribbon that Jamie gied me," or even a few peppermints and pan drops carefully kept in their original bag

or "poke." Considering the "hamely fare" to which the Scots have been accustomed, it is rather peculiar that they should have a weakness for "sweeties," but such is the case, as is easily proved by the large number of confectioners' shops in our cities and towns, and their extensive trade with country districts.

Domestic service and farm work were almost the only employments open to women, so it was natural that their attention should be turned more frequently to household management than is the case with their sisters of the present day. This practical knowledge enabled them to enter the married state with greater boldness, and to overcome difficulties which might seem insuperable to the modern girl. Young couples were not so afraid to start housekeeping as they seem to be nowadays, probably because they were content to begin at the bottom of the social ladder and go through the toils and cares which their parents had to endure, instead of waiting until they were in a position to commence where the old folks left off.

This is a matter of greater importance than may appear on the surface, and goes right down to the well-springs of national life. When we see old families giving up the inheritances they have held

for centuries, and large commercial concerns failing, because the young generation shirks honest toil, it makes us pause. But Scotland has a long way to travel yet before she can be ranked among the decadents, for it can still be said of her daughters :—

The Scottish lass from day to day
  Adds to her snowy linen fair;
In fragrant kist she stores away
  Each household piece with tender care.
Her eident hand seems never tired—
  The fruits of toil are decked with flowers—
At morn or eve, by love inspired,
  Her needle fills the passing hours.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ISLANDS

The primitive conditions under which many of the Scottish islanders live can only be understood and appreciated by those who have sojourned among them. In these days of swift steamboats it is possible to circumnavigate Mull, visit Staffa and Iona, or even distant St Kilda, in comparative comfort, and yet know very little of the inhabitants of these detached portions of our country. Dr Johnson, in his famous but not too comfortable tour to the Western Islands of Scotland, acquired immeasurably more information about the life of the people than the large majority of modern tourists, whose facilities are so much greater. Leyden's *Journal of a Tour in the Highlands and Western Islands of Scotland in* 1800, so recently rescued from oblivion by Mr James Sinton, has a freshness as of yesterday, while its wealth of description and the insight it

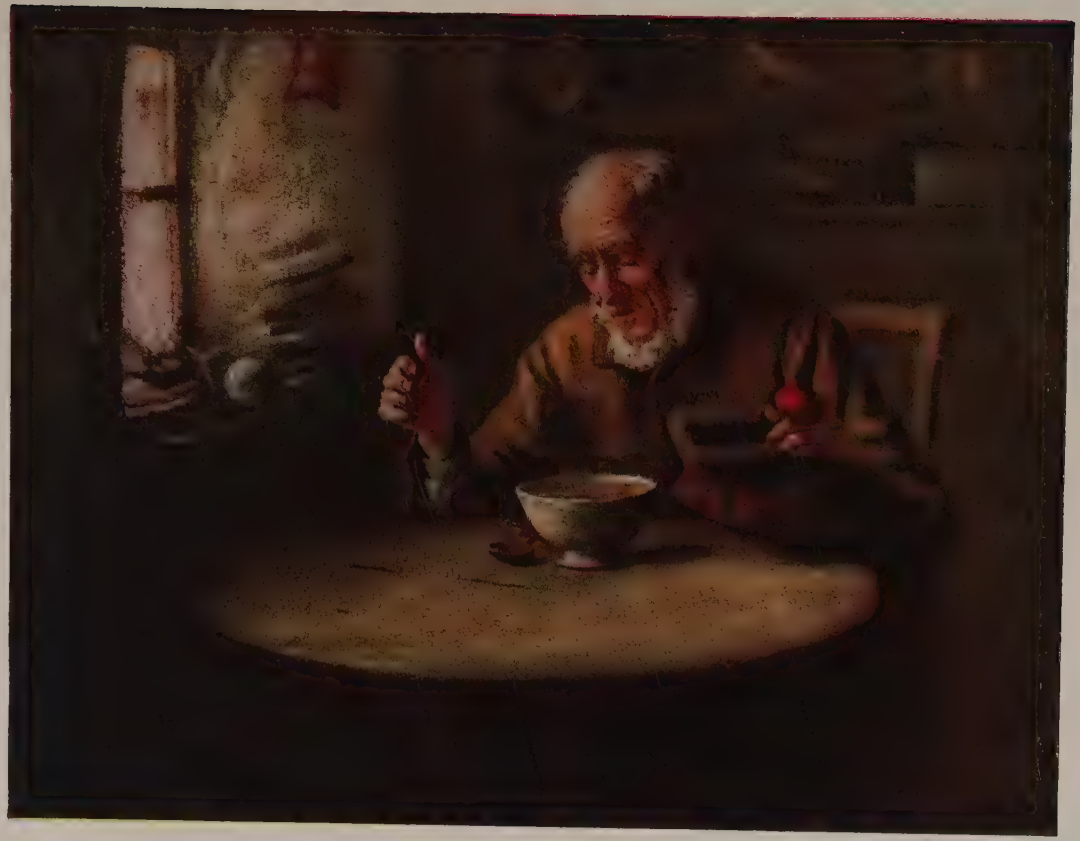
gives into the habits of the islanders are a surprise to those who are accustomed to the useful but necessarily scrappy guide-books with which too many are content.

Cut off as they are from the progressive movements of the mainland, it is not surprising that many of the crofters should be rather indolent and inclined to live on in the same old way, too often under housing conditions which are not altogether creditable. The majority, however, are not of this class, and the crofter disturbances of twenty years ago, which led to the visit of H.M.S. *Jackal* and the appointment of a Royal Commission, were ample evidences of the fact. Much has taken place since then, and the more equitable rent arrangements established by the Commission have had far-reaching effects. The danger of over-population has been reduced to some extent by emigration, but the intense love of the islander for his native home will always prove an obstacle to any great movement in this direction. Valuable additions to the British Navy and Army are drawn from the ranks of the young men of our Western Isles, while the strong, healthy daughters of the crofters find their way into the domestic service of some of the best houses in the land.

Many of the crofters and small farmers of the islands at the present might sit as models for a picture of the men of the past, with the certainty that the painting would be correct in every detail, while their habitations have remained as unchangeable as themselves. National character generally attaches itself to domestic architecture more tenaciously than it does to public buildings, civil or ecclesiastical, and so we find the same type of dwellings reproduced from generation to generation. To describe the turf-built houses—if they may be dignified by that name—of some of the poorer crofters, even at the present day, would be but to depict the mud cabins of Ireland or the simple huts of Eastern lands, so similar are they in many respects. The style of the doors, with their wooden bolts, the shutters on the windows, the absence of chimneys, and the general arrangement of the interiors show the sameness in the ideas of primitive peoples. Though their life may appear to many to be exceedingly prosaic, and anything but comfortable, there is poetry in it, though they may not be able to perceive it as we can.

The summer tourist, who endeavours to "do" Scotland in a day or two, will have very little chance of coming in contact with the hardy race

THE CROFTER'S GRACE



which inhabits the Western Isles; but even that bird of passage may have an opportunity of looking at least upon some of their homes. It is possible he may have got so far west as Oban, and, that being so, let us endeavour to guide his footsteps so that he may see much in a short time. The town of Oban, not inaptly styled the "Charing Cross of the Highlands," is a place of recent growth, and dates no further back than 1791. It has been said that the nation which has no annals is blessed, and, if the saying can be applied to towns, Oban is a blessed place indeed. Little over half a century ago it was described as a "village with a roadstead containing a small complement of shipping and boats and a respectable range of whitewashed houses fronting the harbour." What a contrast now! The whitewashed houses have given place to substantial buildings and handsome hotels which provide accommodation for over a thousand visitors.

The town, which is now the key to the Western Isles, lies scattered about on the slopes in beautiful disorder, and, apart from being one of the best excursion centres in Scotland, it has many attractions in itself. On the smooth bay yachts are gliding before the gentle breeze which scarcely

makes a ripple on the water. The hills of Morven and the mountains of Mull make a fine background, while nearer is the long island of Lismore (Great Garden), terminating in the lighthouse which acts as guardian to the Sound of Mull, stretching far away in the distance. Separated from us by half a mile of water, which is about the average width of the Sound of Kerrera, lies the long green island of the same name. Verdant from end to end of its six miles, it has a very pleasant appearance, and acts as an admirable shelter for Oban Bay.

To give the one-day visitor some insight into the romance of these green islands, which rise up from seas which respond to the swell of the Atlantic, he must be prepared to walk a few miles with us in the direction of Connel Ferry. Leaving Oban, we ascend the incline to the right of Dunollie Castle, which is seen to so much advantage from the town, though the effect is poor from the roadway. We step out with a will, but the day being warm, we take an occasional rest on some brae-face among the heather. As we gaze up into the blue sky, and watch the fleecy clouds floating slowly along and occasionally tempering the sun's rays, the soothing effect of the fragrance of the wild thyme makes us inclined to linger too long;

so we shake off the delightful languor and proceed on our journey.

That small loch in the hollow to our left is well named Loch Dubh (Black Loch), for if even now, under the bright sunlight, it has a dark appearance, what must it be in dreary winter? We are now opposite one of the most remarkable of Scottish historical ruins—Dunstaffnage Castle. Built on the point of a peninsula, the castle has a most commanding position, and from its battlements the view is splendid. Do you wish a sea view? Then away north is Loch Linnhe, and to the east stretches the long, narrow Loch Etive. Is landscape your delight? Then yonder rise Mull and Morven, while nearer is the long, low island of Lismore, and the beautiful Benderloch district. Should you delight in history, just where it touches the traditional, what more inspiring picture than yonder site of Beregonium, the ancient capital of the Scots, said to be founded by King Fergus I. in 327 B.C.? Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, has portrayed the palace standing high on a rock, "to force of man impregnable"; but there evidently came a day when the city's boasted strength failed, for all that now remains is the ruin of a vitrified fort. After the decay of Beregonium,

Dunstaffnage became the favourite palace of the Scottish kings, and here was kept the Lia-Fail, or Stone of Destiny, which now forms the seat of the coronation chair in Westminster Abbey, and, according to tradition, secures a continuance of Scottish blood in the British monarchs.

Leaving Dunstaffnage, with its relics of the Spanish Armada and its memories of Flora MacDonald, who was imprisoned there for several months, we walk along the shore of Loch Etive, which is considered to be a fine specimen of a submerged glen. Arrived at Connel Ferry, we take the train back to Oban and ascend the Pulpit Hill, from whence we can admire the beauty of the sunset. Resting at the flagstaff in the rustic seat placed there by the Rev. David Macrae in memory of his father, who was minister in Oban long ago, we watch the sun sinking behind the peaks of Mull. The ever-changing glories of the sky and sea present a picture which no artist's brush could reproduce. This glorious scene was worth a long journey, and as the kaleidoscopic colours pass from cloud to sea, and the stars begin to shine down from the depths of the evening sky, to be reflected in the calm waters of the bay, our visitor, if he has a soul at all, must receive impressions which will go with him

while life shall last. As we prepare to descend, a sharp report, followed by a bugle-call, from a gun-boat anchored in the bay, is repeated over and over again in ever-softening cadences among the distant hills of Morven. Up from the town come the mingled sounds of the streets—the sharp trebles of the bairns at play, mingled with the loud voice of the town crier, who emphasises the last syllable of every important word in a most peculiar manner—the whole blending into a soft hum as it reaches the ear.

We would strongly urge the tourist who is not in a hurry, and whose mind and heart are susceptible to fresh impressions, but who has not yet come under the spell of this delightful region, to lose no time in going

> Away to the West, where the ocean's breast
> Heaves to the cloud-swept sky;
> Where the towering Ben, and the rocky den,
> And the lonely valleys lie.
> Away to the isles, where the sunlight smiles
> Along the pebble shore;
> Where the waves' rebound is lost in the sound
> Of Corryvreckan's roar.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SOLITUDES

THE motto of the Benedictine monks, "Solitudo sola beatitudo" (Only in solitude is blessedness), correctly expresses a feeling which is deeply rooted in the hearts of some men, and which has at some time or other found a lodgment in the breasts of all. Our daily existence is so full of disillusionments and disappointments that the life of the solitary seems to hold out a promise of that peace and calm which the wearied heart and brain so much desire; but it is only for some natures that the attraction has sufficient strength to cause them to withdraw from association with their fellow-men. From the ability of the average Scot to remain silent for lengthened periods, it might be imagined that he would make an admirable hermit; but those who know him best are aware that social life has a very strong hold upon him, though he may not make the world aware of the fact.

Many parts of Scotland, from one cause or another, have been so denuded of population that they offer special inducements to those who desire to lead a solitary life. The lover of his country, however, experiences an inexpressible feeling of sadness as the melancholy of the deserted valleys falls upon him. The hills, woods, and streams may be unaltered, but the human hearts that made the place a joy have gone—many to distant climes where they are helping to build and strengthen the Empire. Few traces of human habitations are left in these lonely places, but now and again we come upon part of the drystone dyke which surrounded the little garden plot. Here are a few gooseberry bushes, the fruit of which is gradually lessening in size as they return to the wild state, while there is a plant of peppermint, the last remnant of the simple fragrant herbs which were to be found in almost every Scottish garden. The rowan tree under which the bairns played is still there, but the claim of the wild birds to its berries is undisputed, for there are no little fingers near to string them into necklaces that rival the coral in brightness

The cottage itself has been levelled to the ground, and its very stones have been removed; but here, almost hidden by the luxuriant grass, is the hearth-

stone, still bearing the marks of the last peat fire which burned upon it. No great powers of imagination are required to re-people the place with the good folks who once sat around this hearth in the evenings and made the place glad with their songs. Over there sat the old man resting after the toils of the day, while the ever-busy housewife prepared the evening meal, and the bairns, sitting in the glow of the fire-light, protested that they "werena sleepy," though the occasional drooping of a fair head made the statement rather doubtful. But the melancholy cry of a whaup awakes us from our reverie. The moaning of the wind through the dark woods sounds like a coronach bewailing the evicted, or comes as an echo of the lament of the emigrant who still turns with sad longing to the deserted valleys of his native land. Much has been written on the subject of depopulation, and some very hard things have been said about those who have removed the peasantry from the land; but though we may take no part in the controversy, we cannot refrain from deploring the fact.

No true patriot can gaze upon the glens and valleys of his country, where solitude now reigns, without a pang of regret for the disappearance of the frugal, industrious, hardy, and clear-headed

peasantry who were the glory of Scotland. It is some consolation to know that they have, in many cases, gone forth to carry the Scottish strength and character to the utmost bounds of the Empire. It is gratifying to feel certain that they will prove true to their nationality, and that their children's children will look with longing eyes across the ocean to the land they still proudly call their own; but the melancholy fact remains that the national pulse beats weaker by reason of their absence. The natural beauties of the country remain, and may even increase, to the joy of the artist and the lover of solitude; but, to the man who looks upon the woeful overcrowding in our large cities, and whose mental vision is clear enough to see what this leads to, a land without inhabitants is a desert.

In some of the depopulated districts a solitary cottage may be left standing, after the general exodus and levelling has taken place, because it is occupied by some lonely old man who would probably die if he were removed from the scenes which have met his gaze every day of his life since childhood. One by one his relatives have passed away, and he lives on in the humble cot where he first saw the light, waiting patiently for the day when his "ain turn" will come. Such a remnant

of the old times was the late James Tait, whose "auld clay biggin'" was one of the attractions of the St Mary's Loch district. The old man was known to thousands, at home and abroad, who have been privileged to feel by contact the "pastoral melancholy" of Yarrow, while the exterior and interior of Jamie's humble dwelling have been depicted on canvas by not a few prominent artists. Such interiors are becoming rare, and it was natural that this lonely dwelling should prove attractive to those who cherish a fondness and reverence for the past.

During the tourist season scarcely a day passed in which Jamie had not a call from one or more visitors, and had the old man kept a visitors' book, some very prominent names would have been found therein. On one occasion when I called upon him he was expecting a visit from the late Professor Blackie, who never lost an opportunity, when in the Loch district, of having a "crack" with Jamie, whose quaint and pawky expressions would be much appreciated by the patriotic and genial Professor.

An artist friend of mine, who has made a name for himself as a painter of old Scottish interiors, on one of the many occasions on which he was trans-

ferring to canvas the quaint interior of the lonely cot at Dryhopehaugh, was surprised, on looking up from his work, to find that Mr and Mrs J. M. Barrie had entered. Being acquainted with the famous litterateur and his wife, the artist was pleased to meet them again under such peculiar circumstances, and was doubtless highly amused to see the renowned novelist and playwriter listening gravely to Jamie's version of the Chinese story of the willow-pattern plate, as he read it in his broad Border dialect from one of his mother's dishes, which were displayed on the plate-rack, an article once so common in our Scottish houses. All visitors, as a rule, were treated to the willow pattern story and the recital of a poem dedicated to Jamie by an old school-fellow, while the display of sheets of his mother's own spinning was part of his quaint and simple entertainment.

On New Year's Day 1904 some of the Yarrow folk missed the old man, and on entering his dwelling they found him dead on the settle which he often used as a sleeping-place, being a sufferer from asthma. He had reached the age of 74 years, but might have been considered to be comparatively young, as his mother, Bell Tait, was 103 when she died. The Tait family never travelled

far from the vicinity of St Mary's, and Jamie's sister, who reached the age of 80, once asked if the sea was "onything like oor loch." Longevity seems to have been rather common among the inhabitants of Dryhope, as the late Dr Russell, in his delightful *Reminiscences*, quotes the following from the *British Chronicle*, a Kelso paper, of date 15th April 1785: "We are informed that there is presently living at Dryhope, in the parish of Yarrow, one Marion Renwick, aged 102, who has all her faculties entire, hearing excepted. She was baptised in the house, where she now resides, by the Rev. James Renwick a fortnight before he suffered in the Grassmarket of Edinburgh." Jamie's mother, who died in 1882, must have seen Marion Renwick, so those who were privileged to meet her son had only three links between themselves and the Covenanters. The old man, who had shared the honours of the district with Tibbie Shiel, had no objection to the appearance of the fair sex in his humble home, and therefore was unlike another solitary individual who was most indignant when an artist introduced a female figure into a picture painted from the interior of his cottage.

Even these detached dwellings will soon disappear, and many a fair district, which once sup-

ported an industrious and happy people, will be entirely devoid of the human element. Little change may take place in the natural aspect of the district, but the native, who returns after long years of sojourn in other lands, will have similar feelings to the man who comes back to his old home only to find that he can discover no traces of his kindred, save on the engraved stones of the kirkyard. The living, pulsing life of humanity is absent from the fair scenes upon which he once more gazes. The soul has gone out of the familiar spot, and he turns away with a lump in his throat and bitterness in his heart.

The sun shines as bricht on the green birken shaw,
  And dews fa' as saft on the flowers o' the lea,—
Yet lassies and laddies are a' gaun awa'
  To great crowded cities or far owre the sea.
Nae wunner the auld folk are dowie and sad,
  And wearily gaze on the mountain and glen;
They're missing ilk lassie, they're missing ilk lad,
  For hame's no a hame without women and men.

CHAPTER XV

ARTISAN LIFE

THE dignity of labour has ever been a popular theme, but it is to be feared that a considerable portion of the human race is content to think of hard work as a good thing for others, without feeling in themselves the life-giving impulses which proceed from toil. Work is the poetry of existence, could we but see it aright, and he who cannot find poetry among the toiling millions, nor feel thrilled with ennobling thoughts as he exercises his own hand and brain, is only half alive. Even the daily routine or drudgery of life, as some call it, has been acknowledged by the greatest minds to have been highly beneficial to their mental faculties. The toil may be hard, but if we accept the advice of Napoleon and "respect the burden," it is wonderful how light it becomes. The humblest calling can be ennobled, and the truly great are never ashamed to toil, just as the victorious Roman

generals could leave the glare and glitter of successful campaigns to return to the tilling of the soil, the dressing of the vineyard, or the tending of the flocks, in rural spots where the plaudits of the multitude never penetrated. Sir Walter Scott, one of the most indefatigable toilers the world has ever seen, in a letter to his son while at school, wrote: "I cannot too much impress upon your mind that *labour* is the condition which God has imposed on us in every station of life: there is nothing worth having that can be had without, from the bread which the peasant wins with the sweat of his brow, to the sports by which the rich man must get rid of his *ennui*."

For centuries the ability to toil steadily has been one of the most outstanding characteristics of the Scottish nation, and this, combined with a high mental development, has assisted the people in overcoming the greatest difficulties, physical, political, and religious. From a poor barren country, devastated and re-devastated by war, Scotland has come to the front rank among nations, and her influence goes forth to the outmost bounds of the Empire. To some it may appear that the northern land is overshadowed by her southern sister, and that the Anglicising of Scotland is only a matter of

a few years; but even at the time of the Union between the two nations such ideas were very prevalent, and still the Scots remain a distinct people. Strange to say, the same fears were expressed by England, and national extinction was prophesied for the southern kingdom as a result of the Union.

The Scottish artisan stands high among the workers of the world, and the development of some of the qualities already mentioned has enabled him to hold very prominent positions in many of the great industrial concerns. As a rule it will be found that such men received their early training in handicrafts in country districts, where the absence of machinery compelled them to master many details which are practically unknown to the town-bred workman. Machinery is not an unmixed blessing, and, to counteract its deteriorating effects on the craftsmen, our trade societies would do well to take up the rôle of the old trade guilds, and allow no man to go forth as a journeyman until he had satisfied his fellow-craftsmen that he had mastered his trade.

There is much pleasure and not a little profit to be derived from recalling the old village life in Scotland, when every little community was practi-

cally complete in itself, and to a large extent self-supporting. The surrounding farmers, assisted by the miller, provided the necessary food for the inhabitants, and in return purchased from the villagers what the farms could not produce. The weaver was kept fully employed manufacturing homespun cloth, while the tailor converted the results of the weaver's shuttle into good comfortable attire which was not subject to fluctuations of fashion. The tanner prepared the hides which the shoemaker fabricated into foot-gear, the durability of which made up for any lack or elegance in shape. The joiner was much in request, for he frequently combined the callings of millwright, cartwright, cabinet-maker, upholsterer and undertaker, while the calling of the blacksmith was one of the most important in the community. In the olden days the cooper was kept busy making wash-tubs, water-stoups, bickers, etc., while the masons and drystone dykers were seldom unemployed. Thatchers, hedgers, ditchers, candle-makers, and many other minor crafts were represented in very small localities, and all seemed to get a living somehow without having to work at high pressure.

Who that has had the experience will forget

the gatherings in the village smiddy, where the news of the district was retailed and discussed; or the meetings in the weaving shop, where the affairs of the nation received due attention? The shoemaker's shop was much frequented by those who enjoyed a "crack," and among the company was generally a boy eagerly watching the progress of his annual pair of boots, the completion of which had been so often promised that "hope deferred" had caused the youngster to decide to remain until his foot-gear was finished. One can almost feel the healthy smell of pine or hardwood shavings when recalling the interior of the joiner's shop, where could be seen the making of the bridal furniture, the bairn's cradle, or the last sad receptacle for poor humanity.

Though such a life may seem slow and humdrum to many people, there was a zest in it, and individuality had plenty of scope. Native humour and mother-wit gave a spice to existence among the older men, while the younger craftsmen, when their day's toil was over, had many things to take up their attention. In summer outdoor sports proved an unfailing attraction, and great were the efforts which were made to excel in running, jumping and wrestling, putting the ball, throwing

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the hammer, tossing the caber, or quoiting. The middle-aged men, as a rule, were devoted to the angle, and the baskets of trout they brought home at the gloamin's fa' added not a little to the commissariat department of their households.

During the long winter evenings the young artisans had many opportunities of enjoying their leisure, as well as chances of improving their minds by reading, undisturbed by the restlessness which characterises present-day existence, or the flood of scrap literature which meets us on every hand. The Dominie frequently had evening classes, which were well attended, and, though not a little horse-play was indulged in at times, those really anxious to improve their minds received much benefit. Then there was the visit of the singing-master, whose course of lessons was well patronised, while the dancing-master secured quite a large number of pupils of both sexes. The closing concert of the former, and the finishing ball of the latter, were local events of no small importance, for then the old folks were present to see and criticise the progress made by the pupils. Adding to these the "kirn" at the farm, the New Year ball at the "big hoose," an occasional marriage or christening, and a few minor social events, it will be seen that

the artisan life in our villages, when these little communities were almost independent of outside influences, was anything but dull and uninteresting.

Practical joking was much indulged in by the young men, but these "ploys" were generally marked by an absence of wilful mischief and a consequent abundance of genuine fun. One of the best examples of this I ever heard was related by the Scottish singer already referred to. When his father was a young man, he, along with his village companions, decided to play a joke upon the Precentor. In those days the psalmody was entirely in the hands of the leader of praise, the Minister having nothing to do with the selection of the Psalms to be sung. The Precentor simply went through the Psalm-book, taking so many verses each time, and when he reached the end of the volume, he returned to the beginning. The occasional unsuitableness of the words of the Psalm to the Minister's discourse may be imagined. The young men, taking advantage of this practice, decided to get some fun out of it. They gained access to the vestry of the kirk on the Saturday night, took the Precentor's Psalm-book, and knowing what portion was to be sung on the morrow, neatly pasted in the first page of the well-

known ballad of "Chevy Chase," the type of which was the same as in the Psalm-book. On the following day the Precentor, as was the custom in those days, read each line before singing it, and so proceeded without hesitation with, "God prosper long our noble king." The second line, "Our lives and safeties all," was similarly treated; while the third line, "A woful hunting once there did," though causing misgivings to some of the congregation, seemed to give no trouble to the old man, who may have been indulging a little in strong beverages on the previous evening. Having reached the fourth line, he read, "In Chevy Chase befall." Muttering, "Hoots! I maun be turnin' blind," he adjusted his spectacles and held the book closer. Finding the exact words there, he gazed round him for a few seconds, as if he had doubts of his own sanity, and said: "Weel, freends, I'm clean bambazed! I've sung the Psalms for thretty years, but never saw 'Chevy Chase' in them before."

The life in these village communities had its drawbacks, and the inhabitants were deprived of many comforts which we enjoy; but it is a great mistake to imagine that the life was monotonous or unprofitable. As has been shown, the crafts flourished and had an importance which they

seldom have now, while the craftsman was a man of influence, and was fully conscious of the nobility of his calling.

There's a joy in the weaver's shuttle,
And a song in the spinning-wheel;
There's a glorious thrill in deeds of skill
That only workers feel.
There's a life in the swinging hammer
And the merry anvil's ring;
There's a sweet repose at evening's close
That wealth can never bring.

CHAPTER XVI

SMALL FARMS

THE tilling of the soil is the most natural of all occupations, and the agriculturist, when all is said and done, is perhaps the most important member of the community. Without the results of his labours we are poor indeed, for most of our so-called necessaries of life are but luxuries when the fruits of the soil are at stake. No true patriot can watch the disappearance of the small farmer from our country without regretting the necessity—if it indeed be a necessity—which demands that the many small farms shall be merged into a few large ones. The altered conditions under which the world's food-supplies are now produced, and the lack of any proper system of co-operation among the farmers, have brought about the present regrettable state of affairs; but it is just possible that by new and improved modes of united

working the day of small farms may return, and the solitary places be made once more glad with the warm, pulsing life of humanity.

We have heard much about deer forests and depopulation in the Highlands; but the same state of affairs has been produced in the Lowlands, where the old arguments as to barren and unfruitful soil lose their point. I have often been saddened, when standing on the top of some great broad Border hill, by finding that no human habitation was in sight. Far as the eye could reach were soft, rounded hills, verdure-clad to their summits, owing much of their greenness to the fact that not so many years ago their sloping sides were under cultivation. Down in the valleys, through which the little burns wimple, were open spaces where once stood thriving villages, filled with the glad music of daily toil. The ring of the anvil, the click of the shuttle, and the merry voices of the bairns at play once resounded through these solitudes, while down the hillsides, as the evening shadows began to lengthen, might be heard the jingling of the horses' chains, as the toilers gladly returned after the labours of the day. How altered everything now is! Nothing is heard but the bleating of sheep or the scream of the wild

bird, and the glare of noonday is almost as solemn as midnight's darkest hour.

Farm life is not the dull daily round which many imagine it to be, and to the intelligent eye its employments are full of interesting variety. In the early morn the ploughman goes whistling to the field, for though he knows that the toil which lies before him will be severe, he feels that thrill of freedom which compensates for many discomforts. The noonday rest is enjoyed by man and beast with a relish which only rural toilers can enjoy, and when the twilight shadows begin to creep up the glen and the evening mists encircle the hilltops, the homecoming has a joy all its own. Even the proverbial uncertainty of the weather in Scotland adds zest to country life, and introduces an element of speculation which provides subjects for conversation. The changing seasons which bring their ever-fresh mysteries to greet new generations have all their special tasks for the agriculturist, and the careful preparation for these marks the successful farmer.

In the byegone days, when the farms were small, the life was even more eventful than it is now, and many things had to be attended to which are now rendered unnecessary. Occasionally the cow had

to assist in drawing the rather primitive plough, and even the guidwife has been requisitioned for this work at a pinch. Gathering peats or roots, and storing them for winter use, was also a necessary task, for the railways were either non-existent or too far away to render a supply of coal possible. Only a few years ago a contractor used to convey a cartload of coal to an outlying farm near Loch Katrine, and, though the distance traversed was not very great, the task occupied two days. During the latter part of the journey the road was so difficult that half of the load had to be left at the wayside until the other half had been delivered.

Sheep-washings, sheep-shearings, etc., were great events in the small farmer's calendar, and generally brought together assistants from neighbouring farms, which added a spice of variety to these operations. Then the great crowning event of the year, the harvest, was not rushed through with machinery while the harvest field was full of life and not a little mirth. From our advanced standpoint the agriculture of the past may appear very primitive and unprofitable, but it suited the times, and though it caused much toil and provided few comforts, it generally placed the small farmer and his family beyond the reach of want. From a

THE NEW TACK (LEASE)

national point of view the hard toil had many compensations, for it developed in the farmers and peasants the virtues of industry, thrift, forethought, and unobtrusive piety. These virtues were generally put to the test when the lease of the farm had run out, and a new lease or "tack," as it is called, was rendered necessary. At such a time a visit from the factor or Laird's factotum was full of momentous possibilities, for on the result of the conference depended the verdict of "sit or flit." Eager to increase his employer's financial returns from the land, the factor would endeavour to raise the rent, on the ground that the farmer's profits had placed him in a much better position than when he came into the farm, shutting his eyes to the fact that any increase in the value of the land was entirely due to the toiler who, in the sweat of his brow, had improved it and made it more fruitful. The farmer, while paying all due deference to the Laird's representative, would argue the various points with a clearness which was the result of much previous thinking. If the Laird had no desire to see his land in the hands of only a few men, the small farmer was generally safe, and, after a good deal of haggling about necessary repairs, the new tack was granted.

Each small farm had an individuality of its own, and these separate characteristics, when brought together, added an interest to the life of the agricultural communities. There are few cheerier places than a farmhouse in the evening, when the men folk come in and the toils of the day are over. The presence of one or two men from a neighbouring farm lends variety to the company, and soon the laughing and daffing becomes general. The farm kitchen, where these evening gatherings are generally held, is wide and roomy, and the big peat fire sends a ruddy glow along the smooth flagstones of the floor, and creates fantastic shadows among the hams, onions, fishing-rods, guns, etc., which are hung from the rafters. The goodly row of cheeses on the shelf seems to increase and decrease in size as the fitful firelight reaches them, while the huge stack of peats in one corner and the potatoes in another assume animated appearances. The box-beds for the servant lassies, which have been shut off by sliding doors during the day, are now open, and may serve as temporary wardrobes for the shawls of "neebour lassies," or the plaids and bonnets of the young shepherds and ploughmen who have dropped in to spend the evening.

The pleasant hum of conversation is not the only sound which fills the farm kitchen, however, for the whirr of the spinning-wheel draws our attention to a corner where an "eident" lassie, by the aid of a tallow candle or a "cruisie" oil lamp, is busily engaged spinning the flax or wool which will some day be transformed into her providing. Old ballads, generally of considerable length, are frequently sung, and the "fa-la-la" chorus after each verse is taken up lustily by the whole company. The present generation may consider these ballads a little tiresome and long drawn out, but they certainly contain more common sense than many of the popular ditties of the present day. When the singers have finished their song-narrative, a reel or strathspey is struck up by one of the shepherds who has brought his fiddle in his plaid neuk. The strains are irresistible, and soon the stone floor resounds to the beat of heavy boots and shoes, while the rafters "dirl" to the "hoochs" of the dancers. The Scots have always been good dancers, and those who imagine them to be a solemn, immovable people have but to see them take part in a reel, to form a different opinion of the folks in the North Countrie. The strains are sometimes varied by the "skirl" of the bagpipes,

and then the fun grows fast and furious, for the peculiar blending of shrill and droning music produced by the national instrument has an overpowering effect on the country folks.

Occasionally the entertainment includes a racy story or some bit of news retailed by the travelling packman seated in the ingle neuk. These itinerant merchants were always welcome, not only for the ribbons, etc., which the lassies were enabled to purchase from their well-filled packs, but because of the news which they brought from the outer world, in days when newspapers were only within the reach of the few. And so the time would merrily pass, the weariness consequent upon a day of toil being forgotten in the healthy abandonment produced by the simple recreations of the evening hours.

Farm life, as a whole, may not suit modern tastes, but no one can deny that it is unspeakably better than the life led by the millions who are crowded into our towns, and many pressing social problems may yet find their solution when the "back to the land" movement becomes a realisation. How this is to be accomplished was recently indicated by Lord Onslow when he said: "Solve the problem of living on what your land gives you,

and you have solved the problem which is called 'Back to the Land.'"

Back, back to the land may the tide soon be turning,
May exiles return from the city and sea;
Once more may the fires in our ingles be burning,
And man claim his rights in this land of the free.
The clear mountain streamlet that sings through the vale
Is eager as ever the mill-wheels to turn;
The seedtimes come round, and the harvests ne'er fail,
While Nature is waiting the people's return.

CHAPTER XVII

HOME INDUSTRIES

We have been so long accustomed to look upon the wonderful scientific discoveries and machinery improvements of the nineteenth century as unmixed blessings to the human race, that it comes as a shock when we are told that such is not the case. No one can deny that the great mass of the people have benefited largely by the advancements which have been made; but there has also been a retrograde movement going on which makes for ugliness and incapacity. The huge factories with their deafening roar of machinery have swallowed up the craftsmen, while the subdivision of labour takes the power out of their hands which it seems to give. When the skilled worker becomes part of a vast system of machinery for rapid production, his hand loses its cunning and his mental faculties are deadened.

It is very questionable if the great increase

in scientific knowledge which we now possess increases the thinking powers of the community. Writing on this subject recently, the Bishop of Ripon says: "So much is done for us in the present day that we are relieved of the necessity of finding out how to do things for ourselves. We touch a button, and our rooms are flooded with light. We release a shutter, and we have made a picture. We take a ticket, and we are whirled away some hundred miles to our destination. All is made easy, and why should we trouble to inquire how these things are done? The convenient and clever inventions which put power at our disposal without trouble to ourselves make us independent of understanding the principles which are utilised in these inventions. So we may be content with a superficial knowledge of methods, without any understanding of the principles. I am not sure that the wide diffusion of science has really quickened the general understanding, or stimulated the determination to get to the bottom of things. There is a whole kingdom of knowledge which the general public never enter; and though there are more scientific men in the world now than formerly, yet men need not on that account be more scientific."

The same dwarfing influences have been at work among the handicrafts, and the artistic sense which shone so brightly in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries has almost been extinguished in these latter days. But there are not wanting signs of a revival of the handicrafts, and it may be that the twentieth century may see much of their old glories restored. The encouragement of home industries among the people is a safe investment for any nation. A people fully employed at congenial work is a safeguard against sedition and a foundation upon which the superstructure of the state may safely be reared. Ruskin, Carlyle, Morris, Rossetti, and many others have not spoken in vain, and the men of the immediate future will understand the artistic message better than the contemporaries of those pioneers in the renaissance of the handicrafts.

In bringing about this desirable state of affairs, Scotland has played no unimportant part, for the Scottish Home Industries Association, Ltd., has drawn public attention to the possibilities of the isolated and out-of-the-way homes of the people. Founded in 1889 by the Countess of Rosebery, under the patronage of the Princess Louise, the Association has gone steadily on, and has gradually

widened the sphere of its operations. The Duchess of Sutherland and many ladies of high rank have laboured incessantly in this good cause, and it must be a peculiar pleasure to them to see their efforts being appreciated. Although the Association—which, by the way, does not work for profit and devotes any surplus to the benefit of the workers—is mainly interested in the production of the famous Harris and Sutherland tweeds, it gives encouragement to all the other kinds of home work, such as Shetland goods and other knitted articles of every description, Scottish woollen stockings, hand-woven bed and table linen, hand-woven silk, Scottish blankets, Alva carpets, embroidery on linen and muslin, monograms, etc., carved goods, artistic furniture, baskets and quaint chairs, the latter a speciality of Orkney. All the articles enumerated being the work of cottagers and artisans, it is at once apparent that the work of such an association is most important, and waits but the further patronage of the public to extend its operations all over the country.

On a limited scale a similar scheme for the encouragement of home work was originated over twenty years ago by the late Miss Fergusson of Broomlee House, West Linton, and has since her

death been carried on by her sisters. The object she had in view was that the long winter evenings in the homes of the people of the district might be profitably occupied. Any articles of whatever description, made at home, are offered for sale at an Industrial Exhibition held in the Public School each autumn, and the majority of the goods thus shown meet with ready purchasers, commissions coming even from distant parts of the world.

When such outlets are found for the results of home labour, a feeling of contentment and independence comes into the household, for the women can contribute their share as well as the men. Idleness and extravagance disappear to a large extent, and the tawdry cheap garments give place to the enduring home-made clothing. The labourer or farm-servant, when he discovers that the true recreation is a change of employment, may find that his hand and eye have hidden powers that he dreamt not of. His spare time hangs no longer heavily on his hands, while his mind expands under the thinking-out process necessary for the completion of any piece of work. The encouragement of home industries does not in any way interfere with the advance of ordinary commerce, and the spinning-wheel, at which the

old woman may "work life out to keep life in," need not enter into competition with the machinery of the factory. Mr J. A. Hobson, the economist, ably sums up the situation when he says: "It is, in a word, a practical informal attempt of a civilised society to mark out for itself the reasonable limits of machine production, and to insist that cheapness shall not dominate the whole industrial world to the detriment of the pleasure and benefit arising from good work to the worker and consumer. Such a movement neither hopes nor seeks to restore mediævalism in industry, nor does it profess hostility to machinery, but it insists that machines shall be confined to the heavy, dull, monotonous, and therefore inhuman processes of work, while for the skill of human hand and eye shall be preserved all work which is pleasant and educative in its doing, and the skill and character of which contribute pleasure and profit to its use."

In the seventeenth century a rather peculiar method of encouraging the linen industry in Scotland was adopted. An Act was passed in 1686 ordaining that "no corpse of any persons whosoever be buried in any shirt, sheet, or anything else except in plain linen." To secure that the law would be carried out, the relatives of deceased

persons were obliged under heavy penalties to come to their parish minister within eight days of the burial and declare on oath that the rule had been complied with. Acts were also passed securing the free import of lint and prohibiting its export, while the width of cloth, etc., were regulated by law. The value of Scottish trade, even then, was considerable, and caused continual quarrels between continental seaports, until William, Prince of Orange, settled Campeere as the chief port, and there Scottish law had power, and the officials of the port were legally recognised in Scotland. The trade in hosiery between Aberdeen and Holland was important, but complaints as to quality having been made by the Dutch, an Act was passed in the reign of George II. which decreed that "All stockings that shall be made in Scotland shall be wrought and made of three threads, and one sort of wool and worsted, and of equal work and fineness throughout, free from left loops, hanging hairs, and of burnt, cut, or mended holes, and of such shapes and sizes respectively as the pattern which shall be marked by the several Deans of Guild of the chief burghs of the respective counties.

Though we may not see our fields again enriched

with the brilliant colour effects of the growing flax, so poetically referred to by Burns in the line, "A towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell," we may with some degree of hope look forward to the time when not a few of the old home industries shall be re-established. The spinning-wheel, invented in 1521 in a little Brunswick village by Hans Jürgen, has long been the poetical representative of all the small household handicrafts, and it is not impossible that our young maidens may once again become experts in spinning, and sing, as the thread passes from their fair fingers :—

As round I gaily turn my wheel,
I hear this maxim in its hum—
"A thread well spun in youth's bright day
Will bring you joy in years to come."
And, as the passing hours I fill
With happy thought and merry song,
I take the lesson to my heart
And spin a thread both fine and strong.

CHAPTER XVIII

SHEPHERD LIFE

The town dweller, who watches a flock of distracted sheep being driven through the crowded streets by rough drovers and badly trained dogs, may be pardoned if he begins to doubt the stories he has read of piping shepherds and beauteous shepherdesses; but anyone who has resided in the country would soon enlighten him as to the true state of the case. While the drover with his yelping dogs is the very antithesis of the shepherd, the latter in real life is very far removed from the Sylvander of poetry and requires to be endowed with a strong physical frame to endure the constant strain demanded by his calling. The Scottish shepherds are a splendid race of men, whose skill in the fulfilment of their arduous duties is often the result of the inherited training of generations; for the boy, who goes with his father from the lonely cot to watch the sheep, is almost sure to become a shepherd.

To understand the life of the shepherd aright, we must live with him for a short season in the far-off glen or the wind-swept moorland, where his little dwelling stands out of sight of any other human habitation. We must see him leaving his wife and bairns and the comfort of his home, so that he may force his way through a blinding snow-storm which may have overwhelmed some of his flock. We must watch the anxiety of the wife and mother, as she awaits his return, before we can fully appreciate the bravery of the man, and rank him among the heroes of industry who go forth with their lives in their hands. Winter and spring are anxious seasons for the shepherd, for he knows that his reputation, to a large extent, depends upon his success in saving the sheep from destruction and rearing the lambs which come before the snow has left the ground.

It is wonderful how few of the snow-born lambs die, when we consider the weather conditions which prevail as they are ushered into the world; but our wonder diminishes when we see the incessant watchfulness of the shepherd. His lambing bag is ever ready, and when some weakling is discovered he carries it home, where the warmth of the peat-fire and the heated milk bring back the life that

was almost extinguished. When the weakling has the double disadvantage of being an orphan through the death of its mother, the finding of a foster-mother requires some strategy on the part of the shepherd. A ewe which has lost a lamb has a strong objection to adopt another, but when the skin of the dead one is fixed to the back of the living lamb the difficulty is generally got over, and the shepherd is relieved of one more burden.

It is when the lambing season is past, and the long warm days of summer come, that the shepherd enters the poetical portion of his existence. The hard part of his work is got over in the early morning, when perchance the mist lies in patches along the hillside and the sun has only gilded the higher ridges. When he has seen his flocks properly disposed, and ascertained that none are missing, he returns to his home, if the distance is not too great. Watch him as he strides along, his feet adapting themselves to the slopes in a way that is a puzzle to those who are only accustomed to level roads. The sun, which is now above the mountain tops, changes the dewdrops on the bent and heather into iridescent diamonds. The whins are a blaze of golden light, and stand

forth in bright contrast to the green background. Who that has seen the evergreen whins in all their glory will be surprised to learn that Linnæus, the great Swedish botanist, when he first beheld them on an English common, fell down on his knees and thanked God for a sight so fair? His efforts to introduce the plant into his own country, however, were a failure, for, hardy though it appears, it can only be grown successfully in temperate climates.

When the shepherd stands on some lofty summit, it is not the extent of vision which thrills him, but the impression of the reality and truth of nature, and, resulting therefrom, an intense feeling of liberty. The stillness all around, broken only by the shrill notes of a wild bird or the distant bleat of a sheep, enters his soul, and he is enabled to penetrate further into the mystery of silence than most men.

The shepherd is never altogether lonely, for his faithful friend the collie is ever at his side with watchful eye, ready to obey his master's slightest wish. Much has been written about the wonderful sagacity of the collie, but one must see him "working" a hillside to appreciate fully his great worth, and to understand how impossible it would

be for the shepherd to undertake his difficult tasks, had he not the assistance of one or two well-trained dogs.

As a rule, the Scottish shepherd is a well-read man, and frequently in his plaid neuk or pocket may be found some volume which cannot be lightly skimmed over. As he reclines at noonday on a couch of heather, his eye following the fleecy clouds as they float athwart the blue sky above, his ear enjoying the hum of insect life or the soft murmur of the mountain rill, and his heart filled with the tranquillity of it all, his mind may be endeavouring to solve some metaphysical problem suggested by some passage in the book at his side. Though often removed from his fellow-men for lengthened periods, he keeps abreast of the topics of the day, for somehow history penetrates into the most remote corners, and the foam from the breakers of passing events is wafted to the loneliest valleys or the homes of the mountain dwellers.

A well-educated man himself, it is the shepherd's desire that his family should enjoy the advantage of a good sound education; but the remoteness of his dwelling makes it difficult for the little ones to attend school. In most cases, however, they do so, and the distances traversed by the little feet

would surprise our city scholars, who can generally find a seminary of learning within a stone's-throw of their own dwelling. Far removed from towns or villages, the schools which the shepherd's children attend are very small, as a rule; but they are none the less important on that account, for the teacher has time to deal with each child individually. The smallest Board school in Scotland was situated near Tweed's Well, the source of the river Tweed, but was closed a few years ago. The scholars were mostly the children of shepherds and were few in number, the average attendance being about six. The school-house was a small cottage with only one apartment, which served as school-room and living-room for the Dominie. In one corner was the bed, while in front of the tiny window were two small forms for the scholars. On the wall hung a smoke-begrimed map, which matched in hue the exposed wooden joists of the low ceiling. The whole place measured only a few feet each way, and was not conspicuous for its comforts; yet doubtless some of the little ones, who attended when the weather permitted, will look back with pleasure to their "schule-days." I had the privilege of a chat with the Dominie in his little school-room, shortly before the place was closed, and it

was quite evident that his departure, consequent on the depopulation of the district and the Board's decision to discontinue the school, would be a wrench to him.

In addition to their ordinary work some shepherds undertake, during the summer-time, the care of bees, and it is not an uncommon sight to see a sheep-fold containing a goodly number of "skeps." The hives have been carried long distances by their owners and placed under the care of the shepherd, who sees that no harm befalls the industrious insects, which gather a rich honey harvest from the purple heather all around.

Although the loneliness of his residence and the nature of his calling naturally make the shepherd a serious man, he has generally a frank manner, and, like most of his countrymen, a quiet vein of humour. The oft-quoted "surgical operation" of Sydney Smith is rarely necessary to enable a true Scot to see the point of a joke, but it must be a joke with a point. What Sydney Smith really did say was not exactly what is so commonly attributed to him. The late William Chambers, of the famous publishing firm of W. & R. Chambers, thus relates the circumstances under which the genial humorist made his famous remark: "My reverend and

facetious visitor made some little inquiry about my own early efforts, and he laughed when I reminded him of a saying of his own about studying on a little oatmeal—for that would have applied literally to my brother and myself. 'Ah, *labora, labora*,' he said sententiously, 'how that word expresses the character of your country!'

"'Well, we do sometimes work pretty hard,' I observed; 'but for all that, we can relish a pleasantry as much as our neighbours. You must have seen that the Scotch have a considerable fund of humour.'

"'Oh, by all means,' replied my visitor; 'you are an immensely funny people, but you need a little operating upon to let the fun out. I know no instrument so effectual for the purpose as the corkscrew!'"

Visits to the cattle and sheep sales, or the annual fair, are events in the even tenor of the shepherd's life, and on these occasions the younger men especially can throw themselves with enthusiasm into all the "fun of the fair." The country fair has lost much of its utility and attractiveness, but in former times it was a most important gathering, as can be seen from the fact that Hogg, the "Ettrick Shepherd," when Sir

Walter Scott secured a seat for him at the coronation of George IV., declined the honour on the ground that the event happened on the same day as St Boswell's Fair.

City life may have a tendency to obliterate or tone down national characteristics, but there is little fear of their entire disappearance as long as we have a race of shepherds and country-bred men

> Who breathe the air of liberty
> And feel the throb of Nature's heart;
> Around whose path sweet silence reigns
> And grants the power to think apart;
> Who, far removed from haunts of men,
> Are self-reliant, true, and strong;
> Whose hearts, not dulled by worldly strife,
> Respond to strains of Heavenly song.

CHAPTER XIX

THE HIGHLANDS

"ARE there any countries, father, where no mountains are?" enquired the son of William Tell, and when he received the desired information, the sympathies of the lad went out to the dwellers in the plains who were deprived of the natural grandeur with which he was surrounded. The level country may be exceeding fair, its flower-spangled meadows may speak of peace and tranquillity, the murmur of its calm-flowing rivers may lull the senses into a pleasant langour, but these charms take little hold upon the mountain dweller whose heart is ever longing for the wild freedom of his native home. In all ages there have been those who have felt an irresistible longing to climb the mountains, even to the risk of their lives. This arises not from any vainglorious desire for fame, but from a feeling of intellectual superiority over the forces of nature. There is a charm and thrill in measuring

the power of intellect and human will against the rough resistance of matter, and to this may be attributed the mountaineer's preference for his life of hardship and danger.

The characteristics which stamp the individuality of a nation are the result, to a large extent, of the natural formation of the country; while the contrasts of mountain and valley, field and forest, loch and moorland, are reflected in those delicate traits of character which distinguish the dwellers in various portions of the same land. In all countries there is a strongly marked difference between the natives of the mountainous districts and those whose early days have been spent in the lowlands or plains. In no country is this contrast more noticeable than in Scotland, where the Highlanders and Lowlanders were kept apart for many centuries by a difference in language which proved a mightier barrier than the Grampians. To the average southeron of the past, the Highlands were a *terra incognita*, and he was considered a brave man indeed who would risk his life by penetrating the fastnesses of the North. Much of the danger and difficulty was purely imaginary, but none the less terrifying to the uneducated or untravelled. Nothing will dissipate ignorance and narrow-mindedness more rapidly

than travel, which, if one understands it aright, provides us with almost everything that is precious in a concentrated form. The peculiar customs of different peoples, and the endless variety in Nature and Art, all combine to take the traveller away from the routine of everyday life. His mind expands, his sympathies broaden, and his groundless fears disappear before the knowledge and enlightenment which personal contact brings.

The wonderful development in recent years of railway and steamer communication has made it possible to penetrate the Highlands of Scotland, and return to such centres as Edinburgh and Glasgow, in one day, thus enabling the observant traveller to see much of the natural grandeur and beauty of the North at a comparatively small cost. In the one-day excursions to Oban or Fort William the tourist sees almost every type of Highland scenery, and "mountain, moor, and loch" pass before his gaze as if depicted in some moving panorama. From such flying visits hardly any idea can be formed of the Highlanders or their mode of life, but the barriers having been broken down, the desired end may be attained by an extension of time.

A knowledge of the language of the northern

Celts is not now necessary to enable the visitor to get into touch with the Highlander, but if an affirmative answer can be given to the question, "Have you the Gaelic?" all things are made easy, and the heart of the Gael expands under the influence of his poetical speech. Much of the "Celtic gloom" which is attributed to the Highlanders is a comparatively modern thing, and is the result of the disaster of Culloden and the gloomy theology of the last century. The "gloom" is fast disappearing, and the true brightness of the Celtic character is coming once more to the surface. During the last fifty or sixty years, contact with the Southron (or Sassenach), and the necessity for mastering his language, has made the average Highlander neglectful of the literature of the Celtic race, and even the Gaelic tongue is little read, though still spoken.

There is every prospect, however, of a revival in Celtic literature, and though the visitor to a Highland household may not, as in former times, be met with the question "*Am Cheil dad agad air an Fheinn?* (Do you know anything of the Fingalian tales?)," he may find that the people are alive to the necessity of rescuing from oblivion those ballads of Ossian which are yet unpublished.

The historical portion of the Ossianic literature is of the utmost importance, and a combined and intelligent study of the poems on the part of scholars may cause us to alter not a few of our ideas as to the history of the Celtic race. The battle which raged over a hundred years ago round the authenticity of MacPherson's *Ossian* may have to be fought again, but it is quite possible that the results will be different, and a much-abused name may be placed among the ranks of those to whom the world of literature is deeply indebted. The nature of the Highlander is highly poetical, for poetry has ever a fondness for the mountainous districts, where she comes as a gentle comforter to soften the lot of the upland dwellers, who have to endure weather discomforts unknown to the inhabitants of the plains. The climate does not effeminate the people, for, as St Notker said of St Gallen in Switzerland, "*Dura viris et dura fide, durissima gleba* (hard people, hard faith, and very hard soil)," so it is with Scotland; and just as the mountain climate strengthens the saps and fibres of vegetation, so will it affect the mental and physical condition of the people. Although the weather conditions, which prevail in the North during certain portions of the year, may not prove

attractive to the visitor, there is one season to which this does not apply, for nowhere is autumn more beautiful that in the Scottish Highlands, and the colour-effects produced by the sun, as it sinks behind some mighty ben, are gorgeous beyond description. The purple heather seems aflame, and even the grey rocks reflect its warm glow and stand out from their setting of green like giant amethysts from a bed of emeralds.

Should the enraptured stranger, while gazing upon the wondrous beauty and grandeur of the Highlands, hear at the same time the distant sounds of the bagpipes, the mental impression will be complete, and will remain as long as memory lasts. To one unaccustomed to the wild strains of the bagpipe, the sounds produced are at first bewildering and almost hateful, but gradually he comes under the spell and begins to understand what it means to the Highlander. His mind travels back into history, when the glens were peopled and the pibroch summoned the clans to battle. Back through the centuries of tradition to the days of Fingal and Ossian. Should the visitor linger in the solitudes till the shades of night appear and the voice of Nature is lulled to sleep, then folklore and legend lift their heads and

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repeople the earth. Even though it be all intermingled with much superstition, it is full of poetry and should therefore be cherished. In this age of so-called scepticism we are as credulous and easily befooled, all things considered, as our forefathers were. If we require proof of this, we need only read the advertisements of palmists, mediums, and fortune-tellers which appear in the press, or reckon up their drawings when the law decides to bring one of the fraternity into the police court.

The tourist who visits the Highlands of Scotland will be amply repaid for his expenditure of time and money by what he sees, but he who can sojourn among the people will both see and hear what is hidden to the bird of passage. He will, in the remote parts, discover conditions of life of the most primitive description, and enter dwellings the architecture of which speaks of almost prehistoric times. He will find people contented to live as their forefathers lived, and to whom discomforts seem to appear as the natural conditions of everyday life. In studying the actual present in the lonely glens, he will be enabled to make the distant past live again, and the pages of history will be imbued with a living reality hitherto unknown to him. But he need not confine his

investigations to the cots of the poor, for the homes of the wealthy still retain enough of the old Highland dignity which marked the days when clan allegiance was unbroken, and the word of the chief was the only law known in the ranks of the clansmen.

The earnest student of history will find ample scope for his energies among the older Highlanders, who are still in touch with the traditions of the past, while the searcher after old-world modes of life will be amply rewarded. The barefooted Highland lassie, as she trips along, her lithe figure enveloped in the plaid or shawl, may suggest the figure of Ruth, whose veil which held six measures of barley was the prototype of the plaid. In some districts, especially where the Roman Catholic faith retains its hold upon the people, the old Celtic hymns may still be heard. Each calling had its own special hymn which was sung at appropriate seasons; and though this form of folklore is fast disappearing, it is still possible to hear the "Herding Blessing," the "Milking Rune," the "Herding Rune," the "Shieling Hymn," and many others. But whatever be the impelling force which sends the visitor to the Scottish Highlands—whether it be the glamour of Sir Walter Scott's

poetry and romances, the rich field for historical research, or the wealth of folklore to be found there—it is almost certain that he will desire to return again and again, till he can almost say with Burns, "My Heart's in the Highlands."

The misty Bens and heather hills,
The sombre forest trees,
The lonely glens and mountain rill
The deep clear inland seas,
Still ever haunt the mem'ry
Like some familiar strain,
And wake the hope within me
That I'll return again.

CHAPTER XX

AT EVENTIDE

THE gloaming hour has ever had a peculiar fascination for the poetic mind, and all poets have come under its spell at some time or other, making reference to it in their poems or writing special pieces descriptive of the fading daylight, the lengthening shadows, and the strange stillness which prevails as the curtains of night close around. When "Curfew tolls the knell of parting day," and a soft melancholy settles down upon nature, even the most light-hearted feels a sense of awe and is susceptible to impressions which no other hour of the day can produce. In Scotland, where the twilight is long drawn out, it would be strange indeed if we did not find frequent reference to it in the native songs and poems. James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, conveys a world of meaning to the Scottish reader when he says: "'Tween the gloamin' and the mirk" in his famous song "When

the kye comes hame," or in his finest poem, "Kilmeny," when he describes the return of the pure-hearted maiden from the realms of fairyland, "Late, late in the gloamin' Kilmeny came hame."

The restfulness which eventide should bring is practically unknown to a large proportion of the present generation. The jaded toiler, after a day of nervous strain and excitement, has lost the power of resting, and his recreation too often takes the form of the evening paper, which sends his thoughts and sympathies to all the ends of the earth. A little of this is highly educative and beneficial, but there is a happy medium in all things, and we would be none the worse of taking a lesson or two from the old folks, who seemed to understand how to rest and recruit both mind and body without lengthened holidays and frequent change of scene.

One characteristic feature of Scottish life, past and present, is the selection of the evening hours for weddings. To those accustomed to the celebration of the marriage ceremony in church before the hour of noon, the Scottish custom may seem rather unattractive and lacking solemnity, but the Scot looks at the matter from a different point of view. The true Scottish maiden has a strong

innate objection to scenes, and requires to be educated up to the church ceremonial before she will consent to the nuptial knot being tied in any other place than her own home, and so she is prepared to endure the crowding which frequently characterises a Scottish marriage. The clergyman, not being tied down to a ritual, can make or mar the ceremony, and hence it comes that certain Scottish ministers are in greater request than others, because of their sympathetic tact, which enables them to conduct the rite according to the special circumstances of each individual case. In many particulars there is a striking similarity between the old Jewish marriage customs and those still prevailing in Scotland. The asking of the hand of the bride by a friend, who is called by the Scots a "Blackfoot," finds a parallel in the "Scatcham" of the Israelites, whose duties have been the same since Abraham said to Elieser, who ruled over his house, "Go unto my country and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." Jewish marriages were generally celebrated in the house, and many of the wedding festivities were similar to those of the rural districts of Scotland.

The transition stage upon which we have entered might be termed "the gloaming of Scottish life

and character," for many of the customs peculiar to the North are fast disappearing, or being so affected by outside influences as to lose their distinctiveness. While this is true, there is little fear of the national life being obliterated. Not a few of the customs of the past, which were thought to have passed into oblivion, are being revived, their beauty and value being better understood by those who turn to them for rest and refreshment after contact with the restless whirl of present-day life.

The approach of darkness in the physical world is frequently used as a symbol of the coming of "the last enemy," as death is called, although to many he comes as a friend. All countries have their own special customs connected with the "passing hence" of the spirit from its earthly tabernacle, and Scotland is no exception to the rule. The Scottish people have a certain reluctance to using the words death, dying, or dead, and one who is nearing the dark valley is said to be wearin' awa' or slippin' awa'. When the dying one has passed over to the other side he is referred to as having "wun awa'" or "gane hame." This softening down of the words connected with death finds its highest expression in Lady Nairne's beautiful death song, "The Land o' the Leal,"

which is probably the finest lyric on this subject in any language. The exquisite pathos of the smoothly-flowing lines is typical of all that is purest and noblest in the Scottish character, and there is little wonder that the song is imperishably enshrined in the heart of Scotland. Many instances might be given of the appropriate use of this lyric, which can fairly be classed among sacred songs, but space only permits of two examples being referred to.

Visitors to Dunblane, or travellers who have passed through that cathedral town by rail, may remember the familiar form of James Whyte, who for forty years acted as railway porter there. When the old man had retired from his active duties, and the hand of death was upon him, his last request was that his old cronie John Rogers, the fiddler, should be brought to his bedside to play "The Land o' the Leal." This was accordingly done, and we may be sure that the old violinist made his instrument "speak" in a way he had probably never done before. His soul would enter into the "trembling string," and doubtless the plaintive melody, with all its hallowed associations, would strengthen the dying man for his passage across the dark river.

Some years ago the present writer was privileged to accompany the members of the Edinburgh Borderers' Union in an excursion into Liddesdale. They were a happy company, but even to the merriest hearts there generally comes a minor note to chasten the joy, and on this occasion it was the thought that one who had been a prominent office-bearer and a regular attender at such outings was entering "the valley of the shadow." When the company arrived at Langholm and sat down to dinner, it was proposed that a telegram should be sent to the absent one, whom many present would never see again. The kindly thought was at once acted upon, and the words of sympathy were soon flashed along the wires. After a long drive the Edinburgh Borderers arrived at Newcastleton, where tea was served, and there the secretary read a telegram which he had received in reply to the one sent from Langholm. The dying man expressed the pleasure he felt in being so kindly remembered by his old associates, thanked them for their sympathy, and, as he was wearin' awa', asked that "The Land o' the Leal" should be sung. The present writer was selected to express the united feelings of the company by singing Lady Nairne's match-

less lyric, and he, at least, will never forget the occasion while memory lasts.

Funeral customs have changed very much in Scotland, even within living memory, and saner forms of paying respect to the departed have gradually displaced the rather barbarous waste of time and money which were considered necessary, especially in the Highlands. Stories of the doings at Scottish funerals are to be found in any book of anecdotes dealing with our national characteristics, but it is not generally known that in former times the "death dance" formed part of the mourning ceremonies in the households of the North. In the midst of the wailing for the loss of the departed the nearest relative would begin an almost imperceptible movement, which gradually increased in intensity. This example, which was supposed to show fortitude and resignation, was followed by the others, the movements of the "death dancers" being frequently regulated by the plaintive strains of the violin or the wail of the bagpipes. In Scotland this mode of expressing grief never degenerated into the revelry of the "Wake," and has been discontinued altogether since 1745.

No true patriot will regret the passing away of some customs which have been handed down from

times when ruder modes of life made them acceptable to the people, but he will cling tenaciously to all that makes for manly independence, purity of life, and unity of action. Our country has a splendid record among the nations of the earth, and the sons and daughters of Scotia, by the determined stand they have always made for civil and religious liberty, have done not a little for the cause of universal brotherhood. We who enter into the privileges so gained have a great responsibility placed upon us; it rests with us to pass on the grand traditions to coming generations. Only by so acting shall we prove loyal sons of the soil which gave us birth, witnessed our life work, and presents by its rugged grandeur and wondrous beauty an everlasting picture of Scottish life and character.

From cloud-piercing Bens, where mist-wreaths are lying,
The straths, and the glens, and the isles of the west,
From heath-covered moors, where wild-birds are crying,
We give to the wide world our bravest and best.
They wander afar 'mong all peoples and climes,
Away from the homes by the mountain and river;
While playing their parts with the men of the times,
All true Scottish hearts sing "Old Scotland for ever!"

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